DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 318 CS 215 295

AUTHOR Shober, Lynne S.

TITLE A Portfolio Assessment Approach to Narrative Writing with the Cooperation of a Fourth Grade Target Group.

PUB DATE Feb 96

NOTE 110p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.

PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Grade 4; Intermediate Grades; *Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Conferences; *Portfolio Assessment; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Student Evaluation; Teacher Attitudes; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Processes; Writing Research

IDENTIFIERS Parent Surveys; Teacher Surveys; Writing Tasks

ABSTRACT

A study examined how a portfolio might be utilized to present student growth, or lack of growth, in narrative writing within a 12-week period. It addressed the problem of establishing specific portfolio assessment criteria for narrative writing samples, and effectively utilizing portfolios as an evaluation tool for parent/teacher/student conferences. Two objectives were: at the completion of the implementation period, 50% of the targeted 22 fourth grade students would demonstrate improvement in narrative writing by elevating scores one level on a rubric scale; and 60% of the students would participate in a teacher/parent/student conference during the implementation period. Parents and teachers were surveyed regarding the use of portfolios as a vital link of communication between home and school, with resulting supportive responses from teachers. Parents responded to various queries with positive replies on the importance of portfolios and their use in conferences, and on the necessity of those conferences. During the 12-week period, students completed 3 writing samples, including prewriting, revising, and editing their work, and each sample was assessed for growth and understanding of the writing process. Evaluation conferences were held between teacher and student, student and a peer, or in a small writing group, and a checklist was reviewed. Results indicated that 68% of the subjects demonstrated improvement in narrative writing. However, findings revealed that only 55% parental participation in the conferences was achieved. (Contains 20 figures of data and 21 references. Appendixes include a teacher survey, a parent survey, a checklist, and a rubric.) (Author/CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 395 318

A PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT APPROACH TO NARRATIVE WRITING WITH THE COOPERATION OF A FOURTH GRADE TARGET GROUP

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

by

Lynne S. Shober

A Final Report submitted to the Faculty of the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in the University database system for reference.

February, 1996

CS215255

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

A Portfolio Assessment Approach to Narrative Writing with the Cooperation of a Fourth Grade Target Group.
Shober, Lynne S., 1996. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptor: Portfolios

Portfolios exist in many forms and many stages of implementation. Individual teacher interpretation of the word portfolio directs the content and meaning. The author's research project examined how a portfolio might be utilized to present student growth, or lack of growth, in narrative writing within a twelve week period. Objective #1 for the problem stated specifically: at the completion of the implementation period, fifty percent of the target students would demonstrate improvement in narrative writing by elevating scores one level on a rubric scale. Objective #2 stated: sixty percent of the target students would participate in a teacher/parent/student conference during the implementation period.

Table of Contents

Title Page.....i

Abstract.....ii

Table of Contents.....iii

Figures.....iv

Chapters

I. Purpose.....1

II. Research and Solution Strategy.....21

III. Method.....41

IV. Results.....47

V. Recommendations.....71

Reference List.....73

Appendices

Appendix A: Teachers' Survey.....75 a-b

Appendix B: Parents' Survey.....76 a-b

Appendix C: Checklist.....77

Appendix D: Rubric.....78 a-e

FIGURES

Figure	1:	Portfolio Survey -- Teachers:	p. 11
Figure	2:	Portfolio Survey -- Parents:	p. 14
Figure	3:	Class Gender/Race:	p. 17
Figure	4:	Class Family Households:	p. 18
Figure	5:	Narrative Writing Sample Students A-F	p. 50
Figure	6:	Narrative Writing Sample Students G-L	p. 51
Figure	7:	Narrative Writing Sample Students M-R	p. 52
Figure	8:	Narrative Writing Sample Students S-V	p. 53
Figure	9:	Post Parent Survey	p. 58
Figure	10:	Pre/Post Parent Survey Table	p. 59
Figure	11:	Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #1	p. 60
Figure	12:	Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #2	p. 61
Figure	13:	Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #3	p. 62
Figure	14:	Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #4	p. 63

Figure 15: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #5 p. 64

Figure 16: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #6 p. 65

Figure 17: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #7 p. 66

Figure 18: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #8 p. 67

Figure 19: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #9 p. 68

Figure 20: Pre/Post Parent Survey Comparison - Question #10 p. 69

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The elementary level site school innovated the Year Round Education (YRE) program during the 1992-1993 school year. The program offered a five multi-track schedule. Track attendance was rotated, and one track was always off campus. Based on this system, the school was enabled to operate at 100 per cent efficiency.

The school was constructed in the 1950's and was considered an integral part of the local history. Administrative offices and the kindergarten wing were renovated eight years ago. More efficient food serving procedures were made possible with the remodeling of the cafeteria kitchen. A small auditorium was excavated and replaced with a multi-purpose room. The cafeteria and the multi-purpose room shared the wing with the Media Center.

The campus shelters nine portable classrooms. The newest portable was utilized as a Family Resource Center to help promote community involvement. One portable

housed the Computer Lab, another, the Title I Lab. The Title I teacher utilized a computer-based program for the teaching of reading to identified primary grade students only as a pull-out program. Six other portables were used to conduct self-contained classrooms, including two pre-K programs, federally funded.

The site school had a population of approximately 1,100 students. The racial/ethnic distribution approximated 44.4 percent White, 43.9 percent Black, 9.9 percent Hispanic, 1.4 percent Asian, and .1 percent Indian. The school building was located in a low socio-economic area. Approximately one-third of the students were bused in from the surrounding area. The site school was a Title I school and received federal support. The school qualified for this federal support with 74.1 percent of the students on free lunch, according to data gathered from the School Report, January, 1995. Students of families meeting a low income criteria are entitled to receive free breakfast and lunch.

The staff was comprised of 2 administrators, 52 certified teachers, and support personnel. The certified teachers included a female population of 34 White, 14 Black, and 4 Hispanic. Male teachers included two White

and two Black. The percentage of teachers with a Bachelor's degree was 69 percent, Master's degree, 29.3 percent, and 1.7 percent with a Specialist's degree. The students were privileged to receive help from 130 Dividend volunteers. These dedicated persons have served over 3,747 hours during the past year. An after-school program was offered through the YMCA with approximately 50 students from the site school enrolled. Any week evidenced attendance of between 35-45 students, taking into account the absence of one track. The PTA membership was supported by 39 percent teachers, 61 percent parents.

The fourth grade was comprised of six self-contained classrooms. In addition, there was a resource teacher for Alternative Education known as the Star program. The students who qualified for this program were excused from the room for two hours a day (not consecutive). For the present YRE school year, the Star program format reverted to a full day session in a self-contained classroom. Additionally, there were programs for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Speech, and Educable Mentally Disabled students with special needs. All students were

taught music, art, physical education, health, and media skills on a rotating schedule each day for forty minutes, thirty minutes on Wednesday. Classes were dismissed one hour earlier on Wednesdays. This hour was utilized for staff development programs including inservices, school improvement meetings, and team building.

The author taught at the site school seven years, and currently teaches fourth grade. A memorable summer was spent by the author in 1992, attending the Central Florida Writing Project. Committee memberships of the author included Curriculum and Evaluation, Technology, and Reading. As an original member of the Reading Committee, the author was privileged to serve as a role model affirming the importance reading has in real life skills.

Problem Statement

"Portfolios" connotes a many faceted word encompassing requirements with diverse guidelines causing significant confusion to educators and parents. The author's elementary school established grade level guidelines for the contents of a student portfolio. Guidelines were minimal and included: a pretest and posttest for the grade level, three specific handwriting

samples (July, January, and June), three examples of writing from a narrative prompt (July, January, and June), a math interest inventory, and a SRA placement test. Fourth grade weekly test samples were placed in the portfolio at the teacher's discretion. The contents of the portfolio were not required to be an integral part of a parent conference.

Several problems existed with the utilization of portfolios for parent/teacher conferences. Specific criteria for portfolio assessment was deficient and ineffective in deference to the potential use of this evaluation tool. Portfolios can empower teachers to have samples of student progress to enhance parent/teacher communication during a conference. However, some teachers seemed unable to spend the time necessary to make a comprehensive, meaningful collection of students' works. Assuming the time obstacle could be surmounted, and the teacher compiled the samples to represent student progress (or lack of), the mode of communication of the contents of the portfolio from teacher to parent was extremely important. The author planned, well in advance of the conference, the strategy of communicating effectively with the parent(s). Most of the parents

perceived the information discussed as meaningful and relevant. Vocabulary pertinent to the meaning of portfolio content required interpretation for the parent(s). Ongoing inservices continue to be conducted to educate teachers on viable portfolio assessment content.

Survey results, both teachers (Appendix A, p. 75 a-b) and parents (Appendix B, p. 76 a-b), and research regarding portfolio assessment for teachers and parents alike, indicated the potential of increasing the use of portfolios as a vital link of communication between home and school. Fifty teacher surveys were distributed at the target school. Twenty-eight of the surveys were returned. Interpretation of questions produced diverse answers, as displayed in Figure 1 on page 11.

For Question #1, fifty-four percent of the teachers in the "Always" category concluded assessment could be defined as the process of gathering evidence and documenting a child's learning and growth. Question #2, "Are portfolios workable tools for assessment?" was answered "Sometimes" by forty-three percent of the participants. Thirty-two percent responded to the question with "Almost Always". Thirty-six percent

responded portfolio assessment could be unique for each student only "Sometimes" for Question #3. Regarding Question #4, forty-three percent think portfolio assessment can emphasize what a student knows "Almost always". Question #5, "Do you think portfolio assessment can be utilized to present different developmental levels?", unfolded forty-six percent of the staff with "Almost Always" as the consensus of opinion. Forty-three percent acknowledged "Always" on Question #6, that portfolio assessment would enhance parent/teacher conferences. "Almost always" responses leveled at thirty-five percent for Question #7, "Always" responses at thirty-six percent supporting teacher opinion that portfolio assessment shows progress through product samples. For Question #8, a majority of teachers, forty-three percent, responded the portfolios should "Always" be passed through grade levels. On Question #9, forty-nine percent of the staff indicated the portfolio assessments would "Always" be used as an integral part of a conference. Taking time to compile and use portfolio assessment information effectively was supported with an "Always" answer by thirty-eight percent of the teachers participating in the survey for Question #10.

Teacher comments on the survey swung the pendulum from very supportive to non-supportive with humor in between. One teacher stated, "If portfolios are used as a tool to show growth in certain areas they would be invaluable." One teacher in the specials field of art, music, and physical education suggested,

> These questions would pertain more to my field if I had one class all year. Since I teach all of the students in the school, I would probably use portfolios for students who may need extra help to use in conferences to get the parents more involved in their children's progress.

Another teacher stated time would be taken to compile a portfolio "Only if essential skills check list, books read, three samples of writing, and then interest inventories" were included. The same survey participant also felt only certain portions of the portfolio should be passed through grade levels. A comment of concern is expressed that "A major stumbling block to proper portfolio use is a lack of teacher training. This stumbling block is in place at (the site school), and steps must be taken to cause its removal." A little philosophy was included in one teacher's thought:

> This is hypothetical: however, I feel portfolios give teacher, student and parent a concrete representation of student work and

> progress. Old adage, 'a picture (or paper) is worth a 1,000 words.' Today, we can never have enough material to back up teacher assessment and opinion. The learning process is a road and the portfolios are perhaps the map to that road, showing where you've been and where you should go.

One teacher circled the answer "Always" concerning taking time to compile and use a portfolio effectively; however, the comment was added, "If I knew exactly what would be expected of me." A special area teacher stated, "If I were teaching a single grade I would find a portfolio a useful tool. However, it would not be the primary tool of assessment. There are too many variables." Another teacher reflected,

> If there are <u>at least</u> three product samples for each skill taught (each given at the beginning middle and end of the year) then portfolios can measure growth and what the student has really learned. There should be a systematic, continual rod of measurement. Otherwise it's just <u>another</u> place to dump things!

Another opinion - "If it replaces report cards!" Concern about the time involved - "If I had the proper training and was given the time. I already give a great deal of my own personal time." A suggestion, "Look into the literature about Grady Profile. It is an electronic

portfolio - it's wonderful. At least mention it in your work."

A veteran teacher expressed a strong opinion:

> They call it 'portfolios', but it's just a new name for a 'child's work folder'. I have <u>always</u> shared this work with parents at conferences. Calling it a portfolio does <u>NOT</u> make it better or worse! I think "portfolio assessment" is a lot of talk about something we have <u>always</u> used. It's <u>NOT</u> new!

Thirty-four years of teaching experience supported a teacher to observe ... "portfolio assessment goes hand in hand with the whole language philosophy and being aware of developmentally appropriate strategies!"

Three thought provoking conclusions completed the teachers' survey.

> Students need to know how we grade them and portfolios aid us in that. Portfolios teach responsibility since the students know what's expected of them and they are in control of the products.

> I feel portfolio assessment is a vital method in assessing students' progress. Unfortunately due to inadequate knowledge I feel my students' portfolios are not as thorough and accurate as they should be.

> Portfolio assessment is a very effective measure of individual progress. The work samples are concrete examples and show growth when children are tested at given intervals.

PORTFOLIO SURVEY -- TEACHERS

AUGUST, 1995

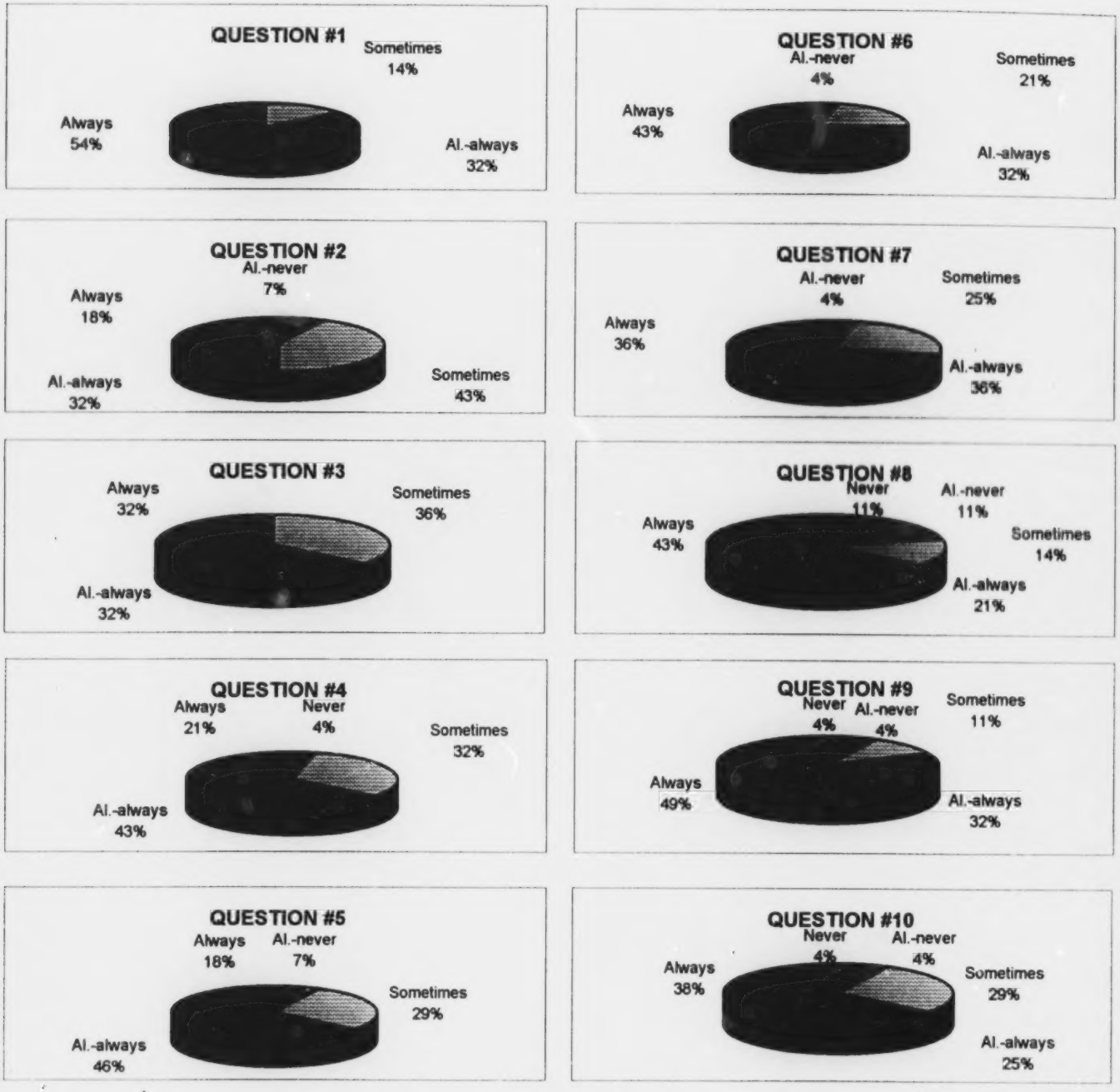


Figure 1

The ten questions on the parents' survey (Appendix B, p. 76 a-b) explored a wide range of queries. Figure 2, page 14, illustrates twenty-six percent of the parents had been involved in conferences which utilized portfolio assessment only "Sometimes" for Question #1. On Question #2, seventy-nine percent of the parents felt portfolios could be valuable in a parent/teacher conference with a response of "Always". Spending a brief time discussing the school day with students, Question #3, was answered "Sometimes" by nine percent of the parents, "Usually", by thirty-five percent and a solid fifty-six percent proclaimed "Always".

On Question #4, "Would portfolio assessment adequately present the student's progress?," thirty-nine percent of the parents responded "Usually"; forty-eight percent said "Always". Responses to Question #5 revealed fifty-three percent of the parents experienced good communication "Usually" between parent/teacher during conferences; thirty percent had good communication "Always." For Question #6, thirty percent expressed concern about adequate conference time spent with the teacher with a "Sometimes" response for the time allotted for conferences. Forty percent felt the time was

"Usually" adequate. Twenty-six percent of parent responses asserted the time was "Always" adequate. For Question #7, a substantial seventy percent expressed the opinion a three-way teacher/parent/student conference would "Always" be comfortable.

On Question #8, parents felt that writing samples should be included in the students' portfolio. Seventy-seven percent would "Always" like to see examples of this type of work. Seventy-one percent of the parents would "Always" like to have home input reflected in the portfolio for Question #9. On Question #10, a positive ninety percent replied parents are "Always" empowered to help the student succeed in school.

PORTFOLIO SURVEY -- PARENTS

AUGUST, 1995

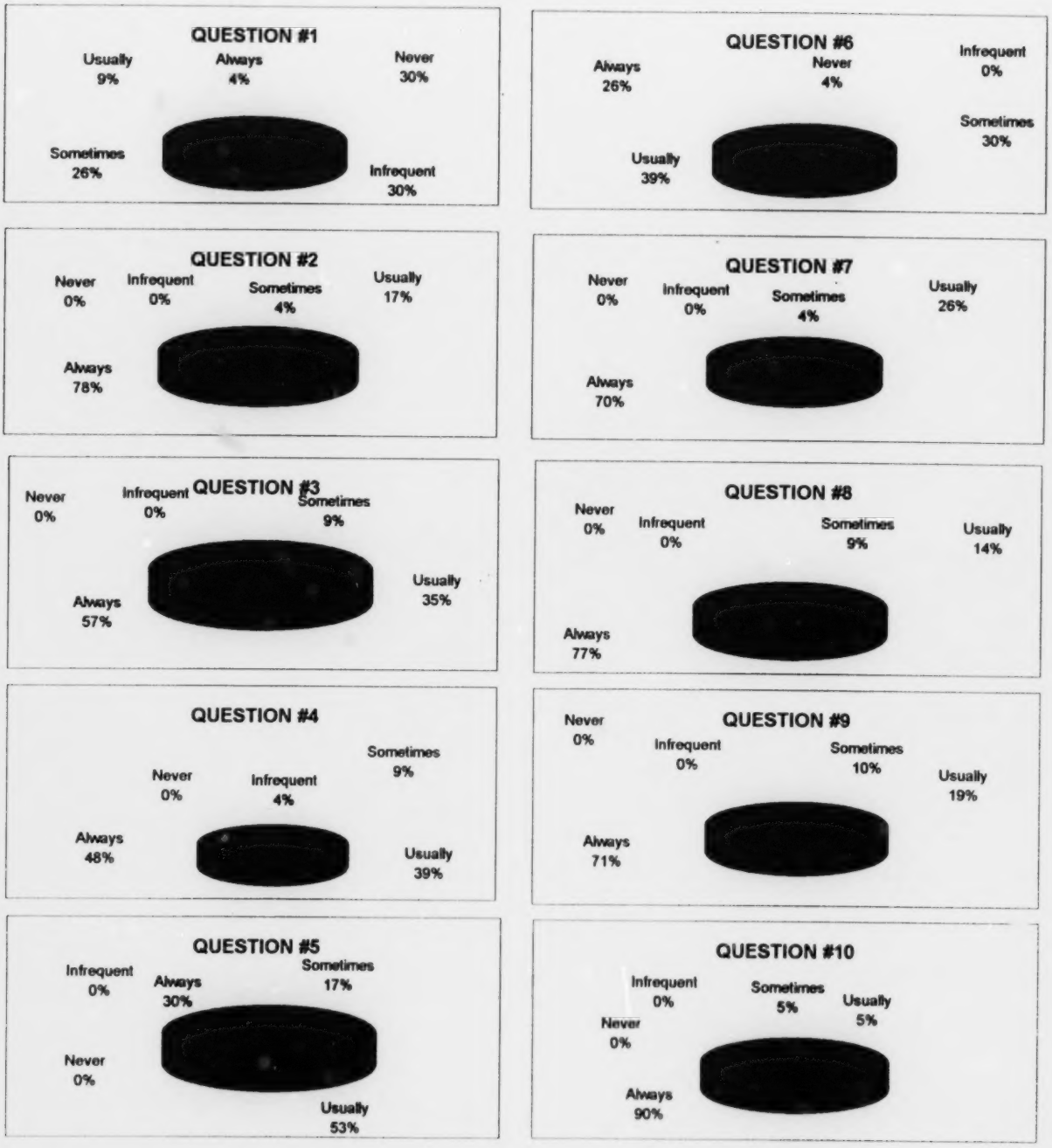


Figure 2

Eighty-five percent of the parents responded to the survey, Figure 2, p. 14. For whatever reasons, the parent comment responses were sparse. One comment reflected, "This (portfolios) is something I wish more teachers would utilize." Another parent stated,

> The questions that were asked I feel are very good ones. Having input and helping my daughter to successfully succeed in school is my main goal. I will go to any lengths to help (her) achieve her goal or goals in life.

Additional comments:

> Needs to be more parent/teacher meetings.
>
> I feel it's very important for both teacher and parent to do their best to be involved, encourage, etc. a child along in school and life.
>
> I will always be happy to help in any way I can.

The beginning target group for the project involved twenty-seven students with approximate ages of nine to ten years. Nine of the students will have reached a tenth birthday in 1996. As shown in Figure 3, p. 17, males comprise 45 percent of the target group, 55 percent female. The ethnic breakdown was 14 percent Hispanic, 37 percent White, 49 percent Black. Fourteen of the students lived in the traditional family setting with both parents, eight lived with a single parent, mother

only, and one resided with father only, Figure 4, p. 18. Two students lived in a blended family, the step-parent on the paternal side. One student lived with a grandmother as the legal guardian; one lived with a brother as the legal guardian. Spanish was the main language spoken in two of the homes. The two Hispanic students were not attending the ESOL classes offered at the site school. One student was enrolled in Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) for Language Arts only. Eighty-two percent of the students qualified for the free lunch program. There were no student retentions.

The problems this proposal addressed were to establish specific portfolio assessment criteria for narrative writing samples, and effectively utilize portfolios as a viable conference tool for teacher/parent/student conferences.

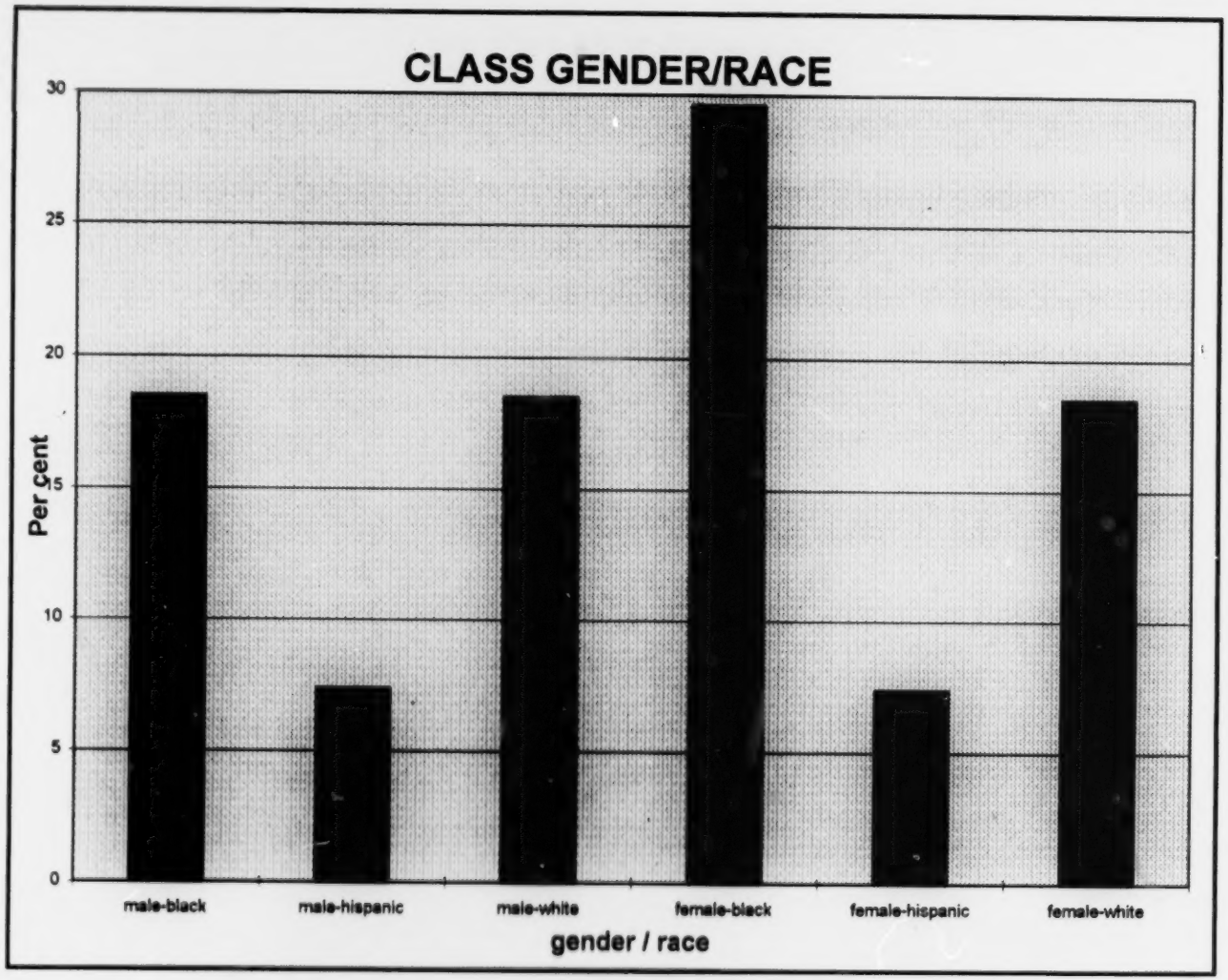

CLASS GENDER/RACE
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Per cent
male-black
male-hispanic
male-white
female-black
female-hispanic
female-white
gender / race

Figure 3

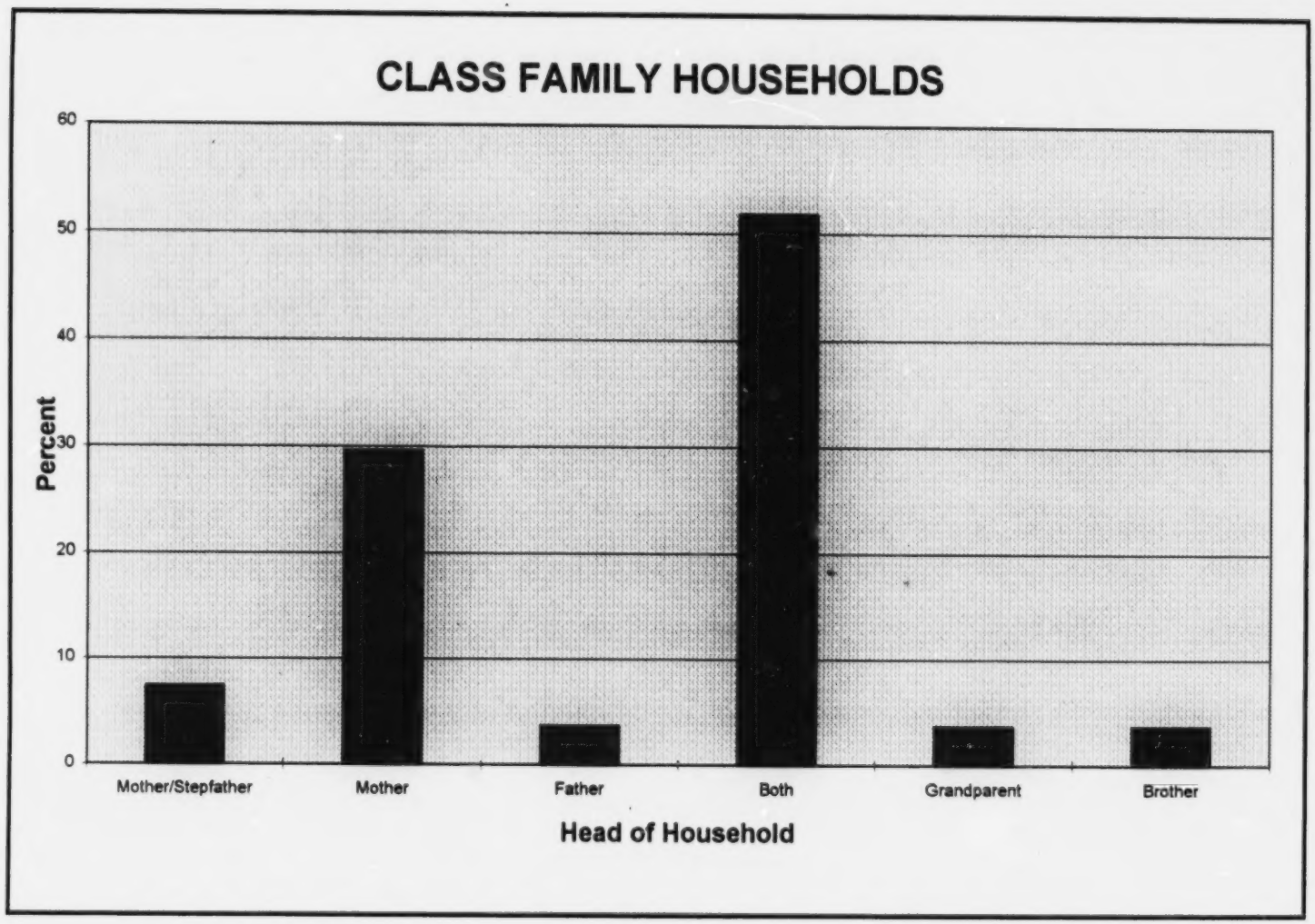

CLASS FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percent
Mother/Stepfather
Mother
Father
Both
Grandparent
Brother
Head of Household

Figure 4

Outcome Objectives

Effective evaluation criteria was determined and implemented for 100 percent of the 22 target students. The portfolio contents exhibited student progress or lack of progress. It was the author's belief that a portfolio was an accurate, convincing tool which could be used as a valid method of confirming a student's progress during a teacher/parent/student conference.

Objective 1

At the end of a 12 week implementation period, 50 percent of the 22 target students compiling portfolios will demonstrate improvement in narrative writing by elevating scores one level on a rubric scale (Appendix D, p. 78 a-e) or improvement within a level. The components for an in depth portfolio assessment will include narrative writing samples exhibiting all steps in the writing process. Narrative writing prompts will include three writing pieces. Fourteen students will exhibit growth within a level, or raise one level on a pre-established rubric.

Objective 2

At the end of 12 weeks, 60 percent of the target students will participate in a teacher/parent/student

conference. Effective use of the portfolio material is a vital part of the project. Sixty percent participation by the parents for the teacher/parent/student conferences is expected. The review will include discussion of the student's strengths and weaknesses. Prior to the parent conference, weekly conferences with the students will be a vital link in the overall picture of effective use of portfolio material. A parent post survey (Appendix B, p. 76 a-b) to evaluate perceptions of portfolios as a conference tool will be distributed at the end of implementation.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

> A tool that not only provides information for the teacher, but helps children question and reflect on their own work, and one that can communicate progress and growth to parents and teachers could be of great advantage in developing and evaluating the child's school program. One such tool that provides these benefits is the student portfolio.
>
> What is a student portfolio?
>
> The student portfolio is more than accumulating a lot of the child's work and putting it into a file. It is an organized collection of data (child's work) used by the student, teacher, student's parents and future teachers to ascertain and report the student's achievement, skills, attitudes and interests over a period of time. It is representative of all the processes and products involved in the child's educational program. It also serves as the basis for ongoing evaluation and planning (Gelfer, 1991, p. 1).

Gelfer, as cited by Wolf (1989), emphasized more teachers and educational organizations see the value of portfolios and are advocating their use to assess and report students' learning. Developing and implementing portfolios necessitates planning, time, patience,

organization, and cooperation from both students and teachers (p.2).

Wiggins (1990), the director of research for Consultants on Learning, Assessment and School Structure, responded to the question: "What's behind the growing interest in portfolio assessment?" Several forces are combining to assess this issue. One is the move toward whole language and process writing, which has resulted in some states moving away from the standardized test as the means of assessing writing. A second force, assessment reform, is a factor for consideration. High stakes are placed on school reform, restructuring, and teacher accountability. Teachers are less willing to accept assessment measures, while neither having input in the actual designing or valuing the measure. Third, as school restructuring moves right along, a look is being taken at what other institutions and organizations are implementing, and also scrutinizing the direction of other countries as well. Quickly observable is the fact that schools in other countries have made significant moves toward performance evaluation. Higher education and business in this country have already moved in this direction (p. 54).

A portfolio, as described by Wiggins (1990), is not merely a folder holding a student's work. From the assessor's perspective, the portfolio represents evidence of student performance in given categories or genres of work. Teachers may need to do some substantial soul searching to decide realistically if students are too dependent on them for direction, standards, or judgement.

> The whole point is to put the student in a self-disciplined, self-regulating, self-assessing position. Portfolios can help in this process, but it's going to be stymied if we're still defining student performance in terms of control over bits of information (p. 54).

Wiggins (1990) acknowledged the time element involved with portfolios is a critical issue. Teachers need to learn to redistribute current use of time. Other countries have set aside a few hours a week or actual assessment day planning. "There's no particularly good reason why teachers can't be freed up" (p. 54) to set aside time to do this work.

Paulson and Paulson (1991) stated the definition of the word portfolio:

> A portfolio is a carefully crafted portrait of what a student knows or can do. It becomes a focal point for the student, teacher, parent, outside evaluator, and others. It is simultaneously a personal and a public

> statement. By portfolio we mean a purposeful, integrated collection of student work showing student effort, progress, or achievement in one or more areas (p. 1).

The contents of the portfolio is guided by pre-set performance standards and includes concrete evidence of student self-reflection and participation in determining focus, selecting contents, and judging merit of the pieces. A meaningful portfolio communicates what is learned and why it is important to the student, teacher and parent (p. 1).

According to Paulson and Paulson (1991), "things" find their way into a portfolio because students and teachers, working together, put them there. The actual process is far more important than the things themselves. After defining the portfolio as a "purposeful collection of student work", the question surfaces, whose purpose? The student is certainly the primary stakeholder in the portfolio, capable of feeling proud or quite vulnerable when someone reviews the portfolio. Teachers may view the portfolio with satisfaction or disappointment, considering the complexity of adding the interests of parents, the web of stakeholders in the portfolio merges. "... the student as primary stakeholder has a

personal stake in the portfolio that makes the portfolio unique" (pp. 1-2).

Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, and Gardner, as cited by Calfee and Perfumo (1993) stated, "Alternative assessment of student achievement has arrived on the scene during the past decade as a paradigm shift, a fundamental change from earlier reliance on standardized testing techniques" (p. 1). The idea behind the interest in portfolios is an opportunity for providing richer, more authentic assessment of student achievement. Teachers will learn capabilities of students when a student is given adequate time and resources (p. 2).

From a survey gathered at a two day working conference, Calfee and Perfumo (1993) concluded answers from states and districts were "quite polished; responses from schools and individuals were more homespun, but struck ... as more authentic" (p. 3). The portfolio approach has inspired classroom teachers to spend enormous amounts of time and energy reflecting on the meaning of their work. Teachers feel good about this renewed commitment. The "ownership " theme and talking about being in charge of instructional programs are motivating factors for enthusiasm and dedication.

The two day conference brought forth examples of teacher sincerity to make portfolios a meaningful, workable, classroom tool. When permitted to develop assessment systems, teachers gained a new belief in students. Teachers "toy" with portfolios, changing products to accommodate needs of the students. The real power of portfolios is evident when samples help teachers and students focus on the teaching/learning process. Students begin to claim ownership and strive to do their best. The whole process nourishes positive feelings. The product does not have to be perfect the first time. Ideas are the primary factor (p. 3).

Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) stated:

> The portfolio is a vehicle that helps students to become independent learners and encourages teachers to facilitate such individual processes. The portfolio offers a natural means of assessing reading and writing within the ongoing instructional program over a period of time (pp. 1-2).

In the research report compiled by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991), forty-three educators were asked to list actual portfolio content. Writing samples were at the head of the list. In descending frequency,the major items included writing samples, reading logs, teacher

observations, informal reading inventories, and work samples (pp. 1-2,7).

The research directed by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) did uncover some practical problems and concerns about the use of portfolios. Forty percent of the group already using portfolios voiced concern about planning and managing contents, talking with individual students about contents, preparing notes, and completing checklists.

The concept and meaning of the word portfolio has many meanings to different people. A project launched by Roettger and Szymczuk (1990) suggested characteristics of a portfolio. A meaningful portfolio is goal based. The samples exhibit connection between what the student decided to accomplish and what was accomplished, with reflection being an evident factor. "A portfolio should capture the richness, depth, and breadth of a student's learning within the context of the instruction and learning that takes place within a given classroom" (p. 3). The portfolio is a means to depict evidence of growth in areas not measured by standardized tests. Students become involved in setting goals and striving to attain those goals.

Interactive portfolio assessment provides feedback to students about areas in which they still need to work. The teacher/student conference should provide opportunities for students to reflect on selections and learning. The teacher's role in assessment is to provide strategies that will enable a student to confirm goals have been reached. The gap between goals, assessment, and instruction is narrowed when samples inform teachers learning has taken place. "Assessment activities should also provide students with opportunities to describe their thinking and what they think they have learned" (Roettger and Szymczuk, 1990, p. 10).

Instruction should focus on content, what the teacher wants the students to know, along with the process or strategies that students need to learn to become independent learners. The process or strategies the students need to learn is determined by the content. During instruction it is imperative for the teacher to observe and talk with students about what they are doing, and how they have gone about accomplishing goals. Touching base in this way provides the teacher and students information about the way students have learned. Discussion monitors how students are thinking through the

process, and includes discerning errors, what else the student needs to learn, and the mode of practice necessary to continue toward goals. "Both the students' work and talking with the students become the assessment which is directly linked to the instructional process" (Roettger and Szymczuk, 1990, p. 16). Teachers commenting about integrating instruction and assessment has resulted in a widening awareness of students' needs. There is a direct lead-up into mini lessons with the instruction student centered. Students are increasingly becoming more involved in ownership for learning/motivation. Students and parents can perceive growth (Roettger and Szymczuk, 1990).

According to Stern (1992), writing portfolios are an excellent vehicle for faculty to use as a resource for teaching self-assessment to students (p. 1). Confidence plays an important part in a student's ability to successfully accomplish a task. As an educator, the teacher needs to help students build the confidence to move forward without constant feedback and support.

Writing samples in the portfolio record development as well as product. Students are provided with evidence to assess progress, thus becoming a participant in

improving writing (Stern, 1992). Particularly in the case of basic writers, students will not make progress as writers unless convinced that success is possible. As a student reflects on writing samples over a period of time, the realization evolves that the ability to demonstrate progress is evident. If a continued effort to learn is expected, students must have confidence in the ability to show progress. Most people, including students, are not willing to work at reaching a goal if there is no confidence in the ability to achieve it.

Herman, Aschbacher, and Winter (1992), stated there is no one way to assess students. Performance assessments offer the teacher appealing ways to assess complex thinking and problem-solving skills. Skills students exhibit in assessment should transfer to other situations and problems the student may encounter. Grounded in realistic problems, assessing performance is potentially more motivating and reinforcing for the students.

> However, while performance assessments may tell us how well and deeply students can apply their knowledge, ... tests may be more efficient for determining how well students have acquired the basic facts and concepts. A balanced curriculum requires a balanced approach to assessment (Herman, Aschbauer, and Winter, 1992, p. 9).

Students need to learn complex, holistic thinking required to meet challenges outside the classroom. Resnick, cited in Herman, Aschbauer, and Winter (1992), verified:

> Such real-life thinking often involves: meaningful processes of decision making and problem solving; collaborating with others; the use of available tools; connection to real-world events and objects; and use of interdisciplinary knowledge (p. 18).

As students learn to perform meaningful, complex tasks in a challenging environment, the individual learning process also becomes regulated. This approach to learning enhances motivation and encourages a sense of efficacy and confidence in students (p. 18). The portfolio's collection of work does not constitute assessment. Assessment occurs when a purpose for the work is defined, specific criteria for determining inclusion in the portfolio, and specific criteria for assessing the samples is identified (Herman, Aschbauer, and Winter, 1992, p. 72).

Portfolios are adaptive for assessment purposes, containing several samples of student work exhibited in a purposeful manner. The pieces represent both work in progress and showpiece samples. However, Arter and

Spandel, cited in Herman, Aschbauer, and Winter (1992), summarized concerns for teachers' reflection.

Are the work samples included in the portfolio representative of what the student is capable of doing? Categorizing the pieces of work may be necessary. Was the work coached, completely independent, or done within a group? The amount of support students received needs to be identified. Does the evaluation criteria for each piece and the portfolio as a whole represent functional dimensions of relevant student efforts? Do the pieces match the students' goals and accomplishments through authentic tasks? Did some of the tasks obligate the student to perform extraneous tasks? Are the portfolios reviewed consistently and the criteria applied accurately (p. 120)? Both creating and implementing performance assessments effectively can be complicated. Time will increase experience and understanding each time the teacher revisits issues (p. 121).

Throughout the author's research, there has been major emphasis on student ownership of the contents of portfolios. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991), reflected on the spirit of portfolios. The unique factor concerning portfolios is the flexibility available for

different classrooms and different students. The spirit of the portfolio is presented through the ownership of the contents by the student.

Students feel ownership and involvement when the realization is discerned that a personal stake is involved in individual portfolios. For some time, criteria has been a mystery to students. The portfolio spirit involves permitting students to have a say in work about to be produced. When students are working from personal interests toward understandable criteria, there is a much better chance of producing quality work. "Portfolios are the link to help the students see the kinds of things that they're doing so they can indeed make improvements over a period of time" (Tierney, Carter, and Desai 1991, p. 4).

Berger, in Perrone (1991), asserted that developing portfolios can be misconstrued as just a new gimmick in teaching. However, portfolios are real and tangible, sharable pieces. Students treasure the pieces contained within individual portfolios. School communities need to discover how to create a spirit of high standards,which inevitably leads to a school culture of high standards.

Goodman, in Harp (1993), stated that teachers believe in kids and respect students as learners. Teachers cherish student diversity and treat students with love and dignity. The role best served by the teacher is to help children expand on language already in use. The student is expected to learn, and the teacher is there to help the student do just that response.

Wells, in Harp (1993), reinforced that children, by nature, try to make sense of experiences. Students are willingly active participants in searching for and achieving solutions. Adults and students alike function most effectively when completing a task or assignment to which there is a personal commitment. There may be a determined effort to achieve a goal, or perhaps the activity is intrinsically satisfying. Both factors may apply to some individuals.

Reardon, in Harp (1993), assisted the writing process with collaborative evaluation. The evaluation includes reflective questions posed to a single child, a small group, or a whole class. As the student becomes familiar with collaborative evaluation, this process becomes part of the repertoire of self-evaluation. Samples of questions include, "How do you decide if

writing is good writing? What makes one piece of writing better than another piece of writing?" (Reardon, 1993, p. 111)

Learning and evaluation are social activities. Part of the teacher's responsibility is to provide the atmosphere, adequate time, space, and questions which will enhance the student's self-evaluation. Social interactions between peers usually provides feedback which almost demands self-evaluation. Self-evaluation leads students to engage in revision.

Sumner, in Harp (1993), suggested that "Portfolio assessment is the opportunity for authentic, collaborative, and contextually varied assessment over time" (p.163). Traditional educational assessment no longer fits the literacy mold in today's classroom. Portfolio assessment provides the teacher with the opportunity to evaluate instructional guidance for individual students.

Church, in Harp (1993), acknowledged the portfolio as a database is still considered to be in its infancy stage. Significant experimentation needs to continue, always keeping in perspective the question, how can students show progress as learners (p. 198)?

Petty and Finn, as cited by Glazer and Brown (1993), stated over the years, "Teachers' comments and the focus on mechanics have often minimized the production of ideas" (p. 47). Students' ideas have suffered from the emphasis on mechanics and too frequently have held little meaning to the writer. The subjective nature of assessing writing causes some teachers to become anxious. Each teacher brings different experiences and expectations to the assessment process. Formal developmental guidelines in these areas are not established.

Graves (1992), stated students need to be nudged to experiment with writing. Encouragement from the teacher is a necessary factor for student willingness to venture into material not tried before. "The nudge itself is a general invitation to experiment" (p. 86). Shared teacher/student time is a vital part of student self-assessment, one-on-one and whole group. Students do not automatically become good self-assessors. If students are to make good choices, specific teacher interventions are necessary - rethink, reconsider, examine, experiment, share. Students do care about portfolio pieces. Usually, when students become aware of what constitutes

the framework of good writing, and have adequate teacher help with the elements that make the piece better, hard work will occur to make the quality of writing match original intentions. Graves (1992), "The portfolio offers a fine opportunity for students to care about their work, especially if they know how to read and select their best pieces" (p. 95). The use of portfolios is limitless.

Routman (1991), conceded the concept motivating portfolio use is a powerful one. Portfolios enhance the whole language classroom "as long as it is a natural process that serves the student and guides the teacher" (P. 330). Knowledgeable teachers who understand the learning process, are willing to give up some control, and entrust ownership of the process to the students are a crucial component of portfolio evaluation. By personal preference, Routman prefers "...portfolio approach to evaluation" (p. 330). At this point in time, there are no set guidelines for implementation or one best method. Tierney, a U.S. researcher cited by Routman, sees portfolios as a "vehicle that gives students opportunities to get involved in self-assessment" (p. 332). Routman stated, "If the evaluation process is

truly to serve learners and their needs, then the learners must be central to the process (p. 332).

Kirby, Liner, and Vinz (1988), supported the concept students need to work in a non-threatening atmosphere. Reflecting on revision, most students are willing to revise extensively if the piece of writing is meaningful and have the teacher's help to make the writing piece better. The teacher's encouragement and the emphasis of good things found in the piece are the most important factors in keeping students motivated through several drafts. Students have been found to do better work and work harder when the emphasis is placed on the good things in a written piece. A simple suggestion to "improve" and expand sections, along with emphasis on what the student has done right goes a long way to enhance teacher/student rapport.

Solution Strategy

In review of the research, a variety of solution strategies were implemented to inaugurate a meaningful collection of students' writing samples presenting viable progress over the twelve week period. Parent

conferences, face-to-face and telephone conferencing, were vital components of the project.

Grosvenor (1994, pp. 14-15), reinforcing the changing paradigm , stated for teachers to do portfolios involves looking at instruction and time differently. Researcher Walters (1994), suggested portfolios mean adjustment, "Teaching and assessing are both happening at the same time and both seem valuable to learning" (p. 14). In order to give students more time to react to samples for portfolio inclusion, the literal action of setting aside the time needs to be seen as a productive, instructive use of class time. Concepts of learning and teacher instruction are not in isolation one from the other. One of the greatest innovations of utilizing portfolio samples to assess student progress was the realization that assessment is integrally tied to teaching strategies.

The author was involved in a sincere endeavor to utilize writing samples for portfolio assessment to present student progress to parents. Facilitative teachers support students' experimentation. Students, in charge of the writing process, set goals for an established rubric. The author, as coach, guided

students through the writing process. Finally, certainly not the least important, portfolio assessment involved a change process. Personal, as well as educational concerns surfaced. Meeting the challenge head-on hopefully brought to the students and parents a meaningful mode of presenting student progress.

CHAPTER III

Method

The twelve week implementation period required close supervision of students' ventures by the author to successfully complete samples of the steps in the writing process for the portfolios. The students completed three writing samples during this time period which were assessed for growth and understanding of the writing process. The project began with twenty-seven target students, the final documentation is based on twenty-two students. Five target students withdrew from the site school within a very brief period of time.

Week One

The author guided, coached, listened, and encouraged the students to take risks with ideas. The author is continuing these responsibilities and nurturing strategies throughout the school year. The students planned and completed the prewriting part of the first writing sample. The process included listing, brainstorming, word mapping, listening, and shared writing. The length of the period was approximately

forty-five minutes to one hour daily. The expectations for the first week included teacher and peer conferencing, editing, and revising. The students, at this point, found the task of staying on focus for the discussions difficult. Some students did not wish to edit or revise. Mini-lessons restored confidence and enthusiasm for the majority of students.

Second Week

In the second week the students edited and published the writing sample. One-on-one evaluation conferences took place involving the author and students in discussion of a previously established checklist, (Appendix C, p. 77, Seminole County Curriculum). The sample was filed in each student's portfolio.

Third and Fourth Weeks

During these two weeks, sharing the portfolio with the parents/guardians in conferences was the main goal. Scheduling adequate time for each teacher/ parent/student conference was a major part of this project. Request for a student's presence at the conference was included in the conference invitation. Scheduling the conference from the parental time block aspect was more than difficult. The author was flexible, offering morning

conferences from 6:45 - 8:00, and afternoon conferences from 3:00 - 4:45, later if absolutely necessary. The major response from parents was that the time frame for personal work hours did not coordinate with the author's availability. This problem certainly needs further research, discussion and realistic solutions.

Fifth Week

The second writing sample extended the planning, prewriting, and drafting part of the writing process to an entire week. Again, the author was available as an advisor. The conferring and revising part of the student writing sample was completed. During these two processes, it was critical that the finished writing sample be reread by the student writer. The conferring was conducted with a peer, a small writing group, or the author. During revising, the issue of maintaining focus was addressed, extraneous information deleted, and information added. Mini-lessons pertaining specifically to focus were frequent, at times, one-on-one.

Sixth Week

A critical factor in this week's editing was the necessity of the sample to be reread by the student

writer. Conferences scheduled with students included peers, small writing groups, and the author.

Success of the implementation during the first six weeks was determined by the author reviewing the check list with the students, (Appendix C, p. 77). As necessary, modifications were employed to keep the students on focus and enhance successful implementation. A few students were able to proceed with the writing process with minimal supervision. Without exception, these students enjoyed the project and approached the writing with confidence. The small group, three or four student peer help sessions, did not function as well as the author had anticipated. The discussions easily slipped off focus to subjects other than the narrative writing.

Seventh Week

This week began the final component of three writing samples. The students were more comfortable and competent with the writing process. Peer conferencing and one-on-one conferencing with the author encouraged the students to produce quality writing samples.

Eighth Week

The students were willing to take risks to express ideas and plans. Students encountered positive and realistic peer support during conferring and revising. The author continued one-on-one conferences.

Ninth Week

Students have developed a pattern of utilizing appropriate resources such as a dictionary or a thesaurus for help to produce more refined writing samples. Conferences continued with peers, small writing groups, and the author.

Tenth Week

The third published sample was representative of specific progress within a level, or a valid move to an advanced level with the exception of a few students.

Eleventh Week

Parent contact and teacher/parent/student conferences were encouraged. The three planned writing samples presented the student writer's growth and maturity as the writing voice and style was released by the student. Effort to encompass all students with adequate conference time was intense.

Twelfth Week

The final week was utilized compiling evaluation of data from the completed project. At the completion of the project, the perseverance of the author was recompensed with the attainment of Objective Number 1. Sixty-eight percent of the 22 target students demonstrated improvement in narrative writing by elevating scores one level on a rubric scale during the twelve week period.

Parental attitudes were monitored throughout the project. The post-survey was sent home this week (Appendix B, p. 76 a-b). Objective Number 2 stated sixty percent of the students would participate in teacher/parent/student conferences. Fifty-five percent concurrence was the realistic result from requesting conferences.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The author approached this project positively and with enthusiasm. Some outcomes were predictable, others surprising with the impact level of frustration they promulgated. As anticipated, the narrative writing samples required intense guidance and direction from the author. There were numerous brainstorm sessions to discuss goals and the writing process. The students discussed, in depth, the utilization of portfolios as a sharing tool for parent conferences. This approach was acceptable, without exception, to every student.

The author created a comfortable writing atmosphere in the classroom. Specifically, this means students felt at ease taking risks. It was all right to make mistakes. The first writing sample was completed with constant guidance from the author. One-on-one sessions of discussing goals and remaining on focus were frequent.

The students understood from previous brain-storming sessions the parent conferences were three-way, including author, parent(s), and student. A predictable response

for every school year, caring parents made the time to share portfolios; parents desperately needing to come in did not make the effort, or simply did not "show".

The second writing sample, after the students had established "voice" and realized risks could be taken, was compiled with a great amount of peer assistance and encouragement. The conferencing was one-on-one, or in small groups of three, with no more than four students. The author circulated among the conferences, keeping the discussions on focus. At this six weeks point-in-time, whole group discussion concentrated on what was working, what was not. Were the pieces exciting and interesting to write and read? Students were experiencing difficulty with focus, often writing two or three non-related mini-stories. A mini-lesson discussion corrected that problem and helped students to choose and focus on a specific topic. One-on-one peer help worked more efficiently than small group conferencing. The students were easily distracted in small groups and departed from the task of discussing the writing samples.

The last writing sample for the portfolio was approached by the students with confidence. The students were comfortable with the writing process. Students with

high scores on the top of the rubric wrote excellent samples. Just as important was the stabilization of students struggling to put ideas on paper. The writing atmosphere was positive and the students were comfortable with the samples. The pervading attitude was one of trying to draft the best sample possible for inclusion in the portfolio.

Evaluation charts of the writing samples manifested reality. For example, after the samples were scored holistically, three students began the portfolio collection with scores of zero. These particular students required one-on-one remedial conferences with the author, along with honest encouragement to achieve pre-established goals. Three students reverted to a lower holistic score after completing the first sample, one of the students receiving the lowest score on the final selection. Most students attained the objective of improving skills within a level or elevating scores one level, Figures 5-8, pages 50-53.

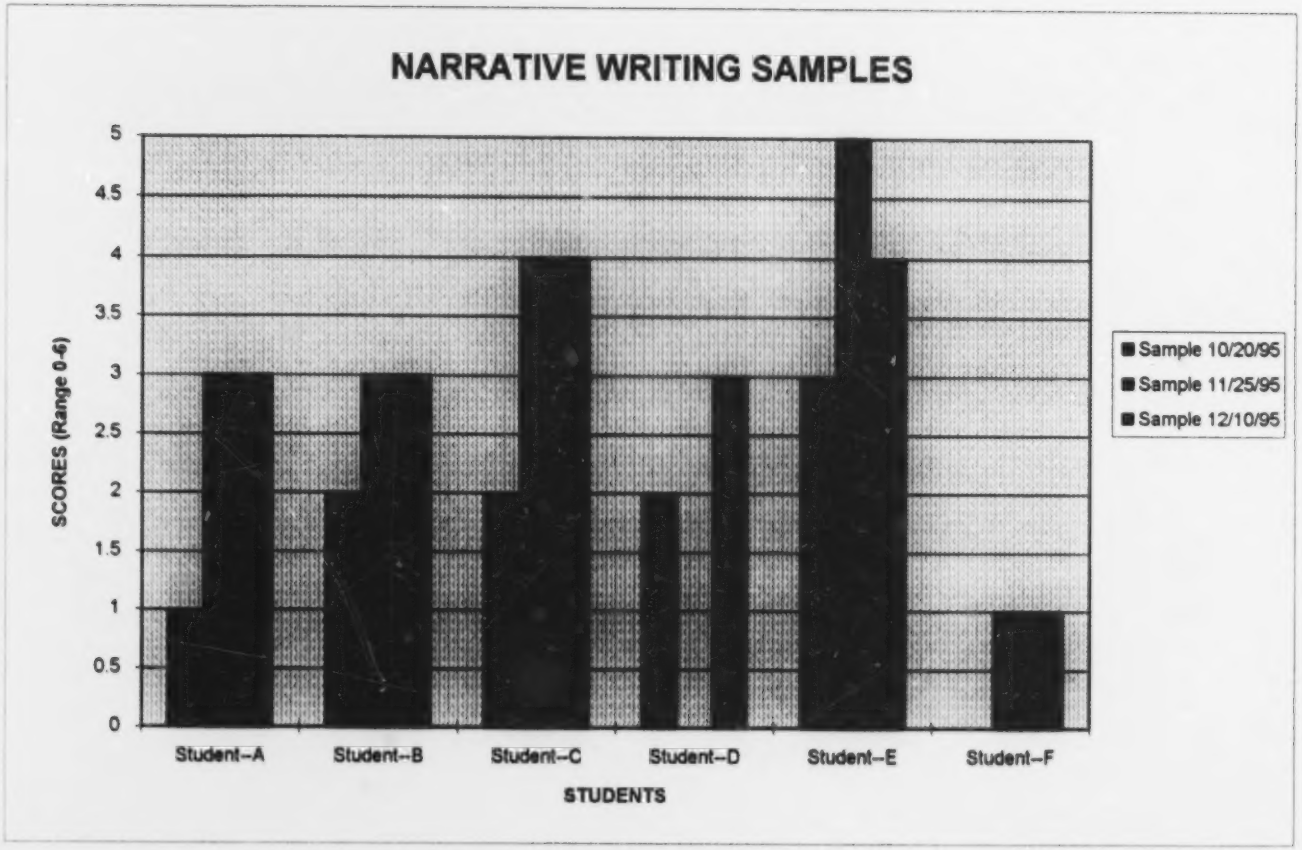

NARRATIVE WRITING SAMPLES
SCORES (Range 0-6)
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Student--A
Student--B
Student--C
Student--D
Student--E
Student--F
STUDENTS
Sample 10/20/95
Sample 11/25/95
Sample 12/10/95

Figure 5

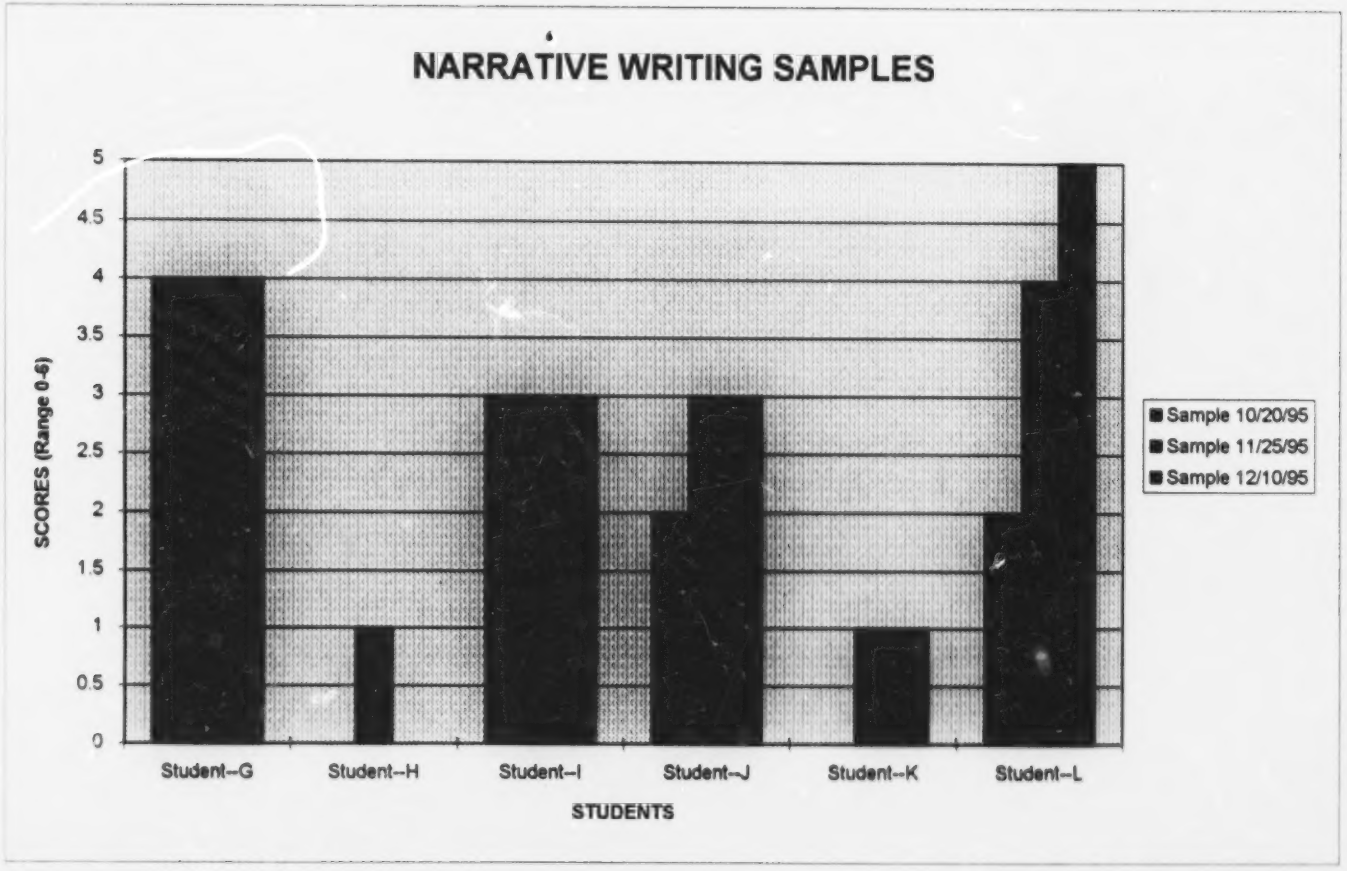

NARRATIVE WRITING SAMPLES
SCORES (Range 0-6)
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Student--G
Student--H
Student--I
Student--J
Student--K
Student--L
STUDENTS
Sample 10/20/95
Sample 11/25/95
Sample 12/10/95

Figure 6

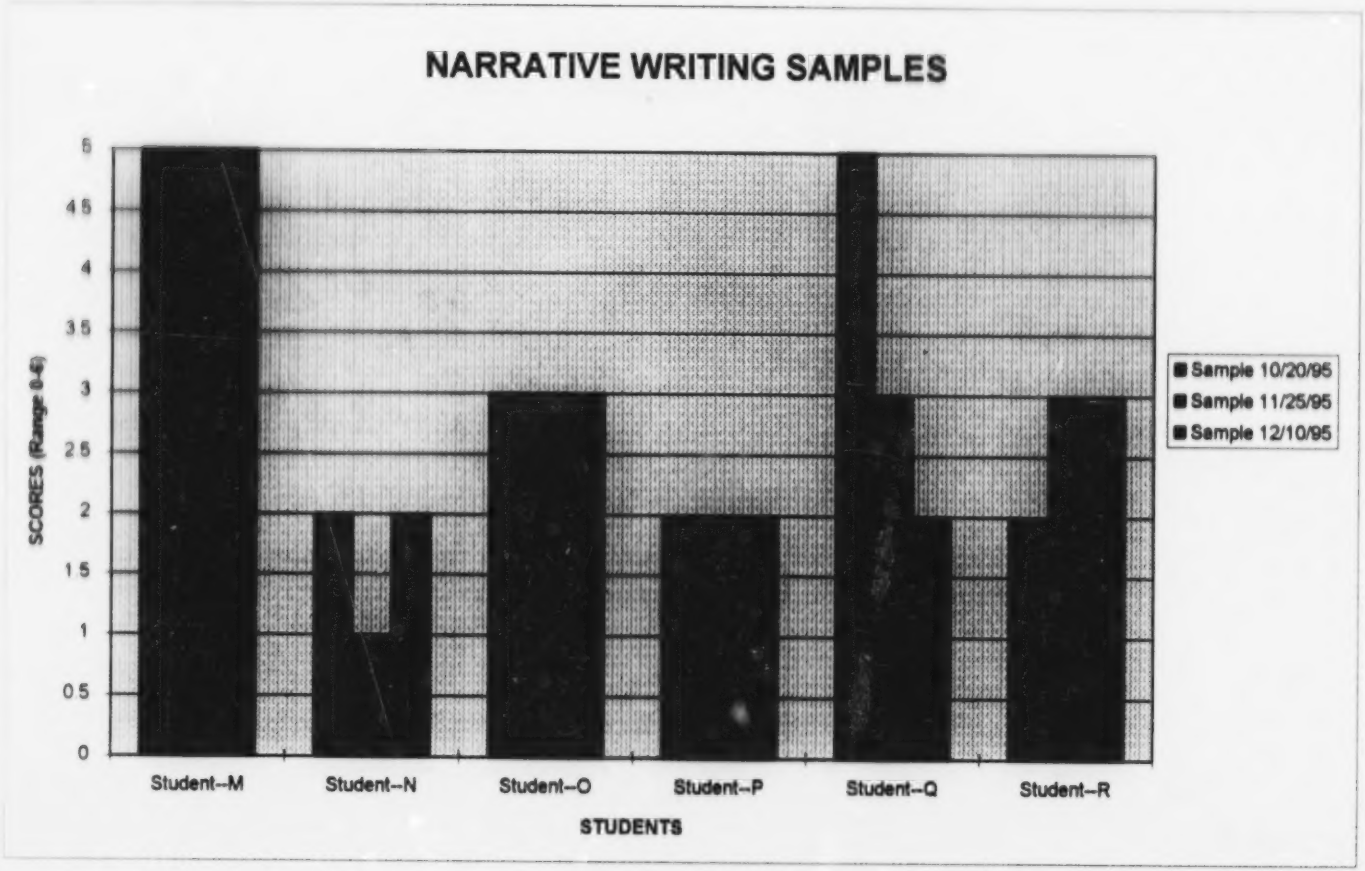

NARRATIVE WRITING SAMPLES
SCORES (Range 0-6)
6
5.5
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Student--M
Student--N
Student--O
Student--P
Student--Q
Student--R
STUDENTS
Sample 10/20/95
Sample 11/25/95
Sample 12/10/95

Figure 7

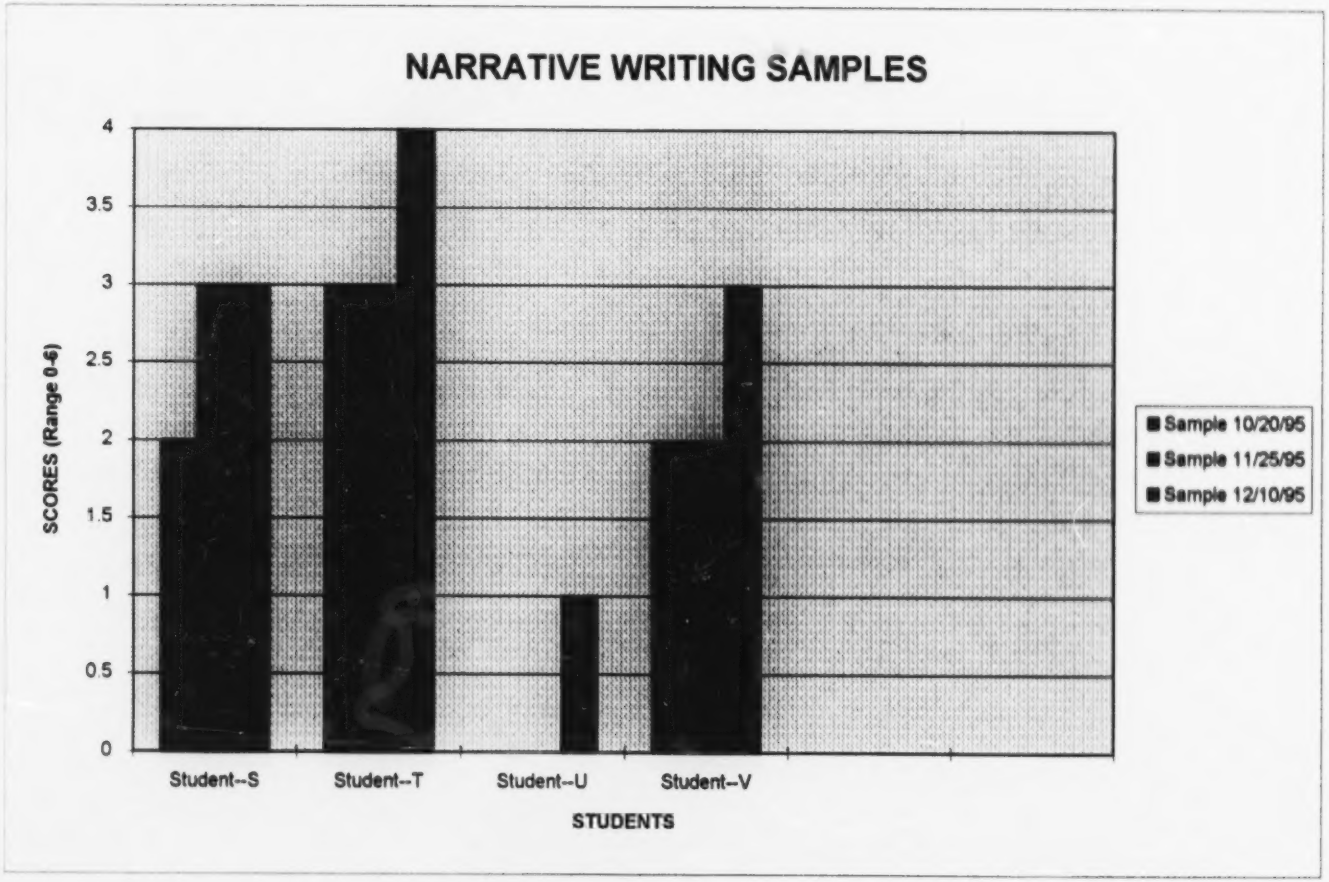

NARRATIVE WRITING SAMPLES
SCORES (Range 0-4)
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Student--S
Student--T
Student--U
Student--V
STUDENTS
Sample 10/20/95
Sample 11/25/95
Sample 12/10/95

Figure 8

The evaluation of the parents' survey was a study within itself, Figures 9-20, pages 58-69. Question #1 (Figure 11, page 60): "Have you been involved in a conference in which a portfolio was utilized to show your child's progress?" The post-survey responses were significantly reversed for this question. The "Infrequently" response was thirty percent for the pre-survey, five percent for the post-survey answer, indicating more parents had been exposed to the portfolio approach to conferences through the project. Four percent responded with the "Always" category in the pre-survey; thirty-five percent stated "Always" in the post-survey.

Question #2 (Figure 12, page 61): "Do you feel that portfolio assessment could be valuable in a parent/teacher conference?" Seventy-nine percent responded "Always" in the pre- survey, eighty-five percent responded "Always" in the post survey. Again, the percent increased possibly because of interaction in an actual conference during the implementation.

Question #3 (Figure 13, page 62): "Do you spend a brief time asking your child what transpired in school on a daily basis?" Comparing the pre-survey answer for

"Usually", thirty-five percent discussed the school day with the student, the post-survey response decreased to twenty-five percent. However, the pre-survey for the "Always" category was fifty-six percent and elevated to seventy percent on the post- survey.

Question #4 (Figure 14, page 63): "Do you feel that portfolio assessment would adequately present your child's progress?" Thirty-nine percent ventured a "Usually" response on the pre- survey; this increased to forty-five percent in the post- survey. Interestingly, the pre-survey category of "Always" stated forty-eight percent, then decreased to forty-five percent for the post-survey. This leaves an unanswered question pertaining to the parent(s) thought processes. Were some parents not certain that portfolio sharing was adequate?

Question #5 (Figure 15, page 64): "Do you feel you experience good communication between parent/teacher during your conference?" This question is a very personal one connected to parent/teacher rapport/relationship. The pre-survey for the category "Sometimes" was seventeen percent; the response for the post-category was fifteen percent. The category for "Usually" was fifty-three percent response on the pre-

survey, decreased to thirty percent on the post-survey. However, the "Always" category elevated from thirty percent pre-survey to fifty-five percent post-survey.

Question #6 (Figure 16, page 65): "Do you feel adequate time is provided by the teacher to discuss your child's progress and your concerns?" This question also is regarded by the author as having a very personal connotation. The "Never" response was very low on the pre-survey, four percent, and was imperceptible as a response on the post-survey. "Sometimes" responses in the pre-survey were at the thirty percent level, but decreased to ten percent in the post. The two positive factors were perceived in the "Usually" and "Always" categories. "Usually" percent for the pre-survey was forty, elevating to fifty-five percent after implementation of the project. From twenty-six percent for the "Always" response in the pre-survey, an increase to thirty-five percent is noted.

Question #7 (Figure 17, page 66): "Would you feel comfortable attending a student/parent/teacher conference?" In the pre-survey, the consensus for "Always" was seventy percent, the post- survey exhibited a five percent increase at seventy-five percent.

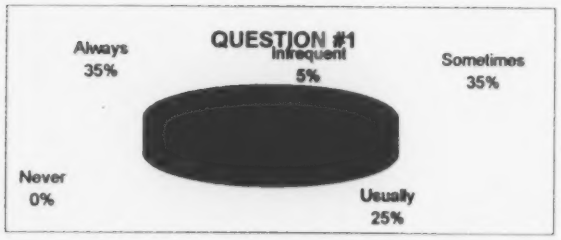
Question #8 (Figure 18, page 67): "Would you like to see writing samples included in your child's portfolio assessment?" The responses to this question established another question. How did parents who participated in the conferences actually perceive the validity of utilizing a portfolio approach to present the student's progress? In the pre- survey, seventy-seven percent responded "Always", the post-survey emulated a decline of parents' opinions to seventy percent.

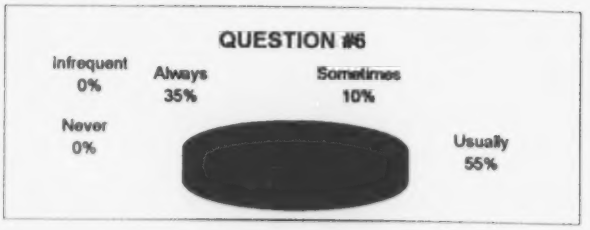
Question #9 (Figure 19, page 68): "Would you be willing to have input into your child's portfolio?" Another positive response, elevating from seventy-one percent in the "Always" category on the pre-survey to eighty percent on the post-survey.

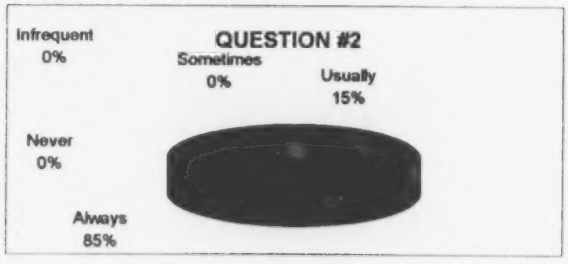
The final question #10 (Figure 20, page 69), "Do you believe that you, as a parent, are empowered to help your child succeed in school?" The "Usually" category on the pre-survey represented a five percent affirmative response; a ten percent response reported for the post-survey. The "Always" category reflected ninety percent on the pre-survey, a reduced percent of eighty-five on the post-survey.

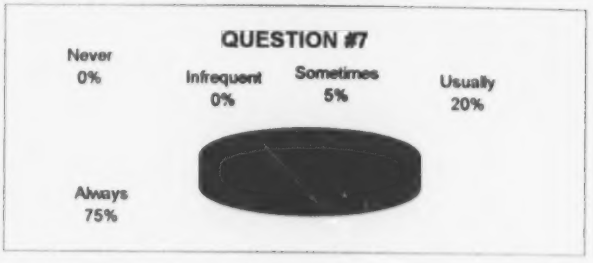
PORTFOLIO SURVEY -- PARENTS

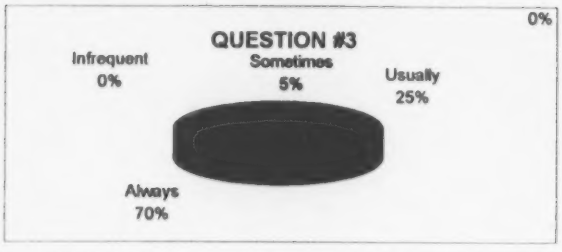
DECEMBER, 1995

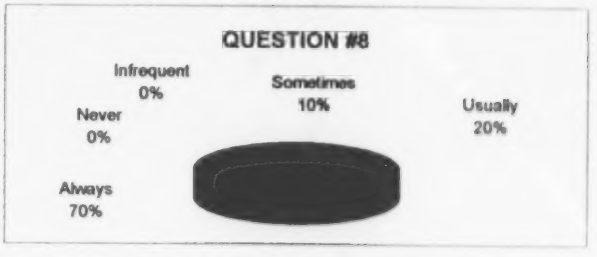


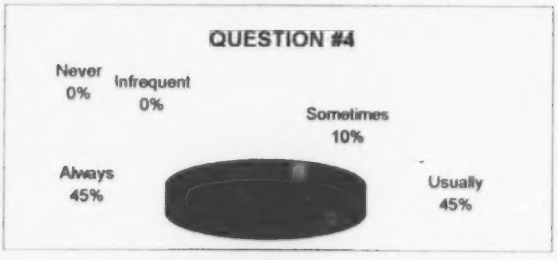


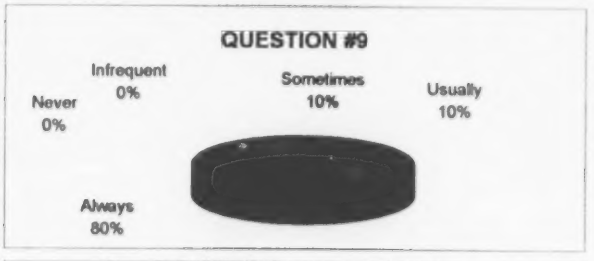


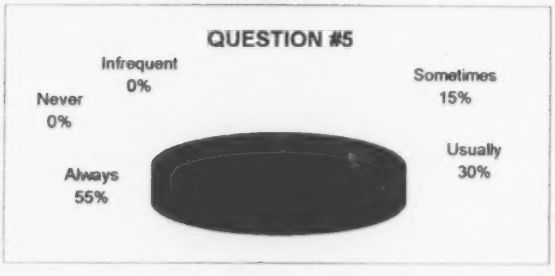












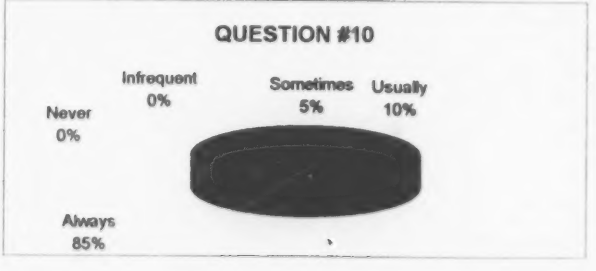


Figure 9

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE

PRE/POST PARENTS' SURVEY COMPARATIVE RESULTS

Questions	Responses	Percent Aug, 1995	Percent Dec, 1995	
		Before	After	
1/1	Never	31.0	0.0	
1/2	Infrequent	30.0	5.0	
1/3	Sometimes	26.0	35.0	
1/4	Usually	9.0	25.0	
1/5	Always	4.0	35.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
2/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
2/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
2/3	Sometimes	4.0	0.0	
2/4	Usually	17.0	15.0	
2/5	Always	79.0	85.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
3/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
3/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
3/3	Sometimes	9.0	5.0	
3/4	Usually	35.0	25.0	
3/5	Always	56.0	70.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
4/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
4/2	Infrequent	4.0	0.0	
4/3	Sometimes	9.0	10.0	
4/4	Usually	39.0	45.0	
4/5	Always	48.0	45.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
5/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
5/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
5/3	Sometimes	17.0	15.0	
5/4	Usually	53.0	30.0	
5/5	Always	30.0	55.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
6/1	Never	4.0	0.0	
6/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
6/3	Sometimes	30.0	10.0	
6/4	Usually	40.0	55.0	
6/5	Always	28.0	35.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
7/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
7/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
7/3	Sometimes	4.0	5.0	
7/4	Usually	26.0	20.0	
7/5	Always	70.0	75.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
8/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
8/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
8/3	Sometimes	9.0	10.0	
8/4	Usually	14.0	20.0	
8/5	Always	77.0	70.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
9/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
9/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
9/3	Sometimes	10.0	10.0	
9/4	Usually	19.0	10.0	
9/5	Always	71.0	80.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	
		Before	After	
10/1	Never	0.0	0.0	
10/2	Infrequent	0.0	0.0	
10/3	Sometimes	5.0	5.0	
10/4	Usually	5.0	10.0	
10/5	Always	90.0	85.0	
Sub-total		100.0	100.0	

Figure 10

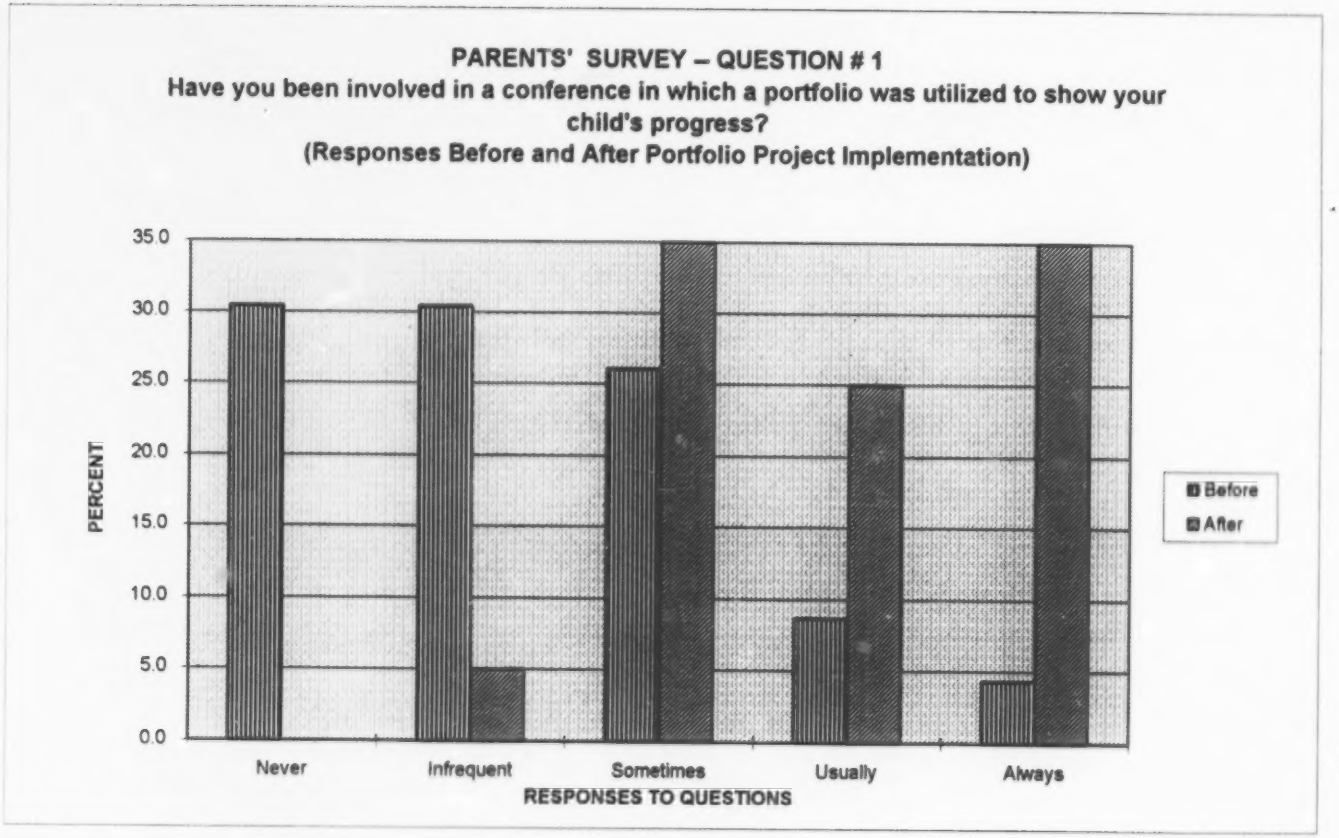

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 1
Have you been involved in a conference in which a portfolio was utilized to show your child's progress?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
35.0
30.0
25.0
20.0
15.0
10.0
5.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 11

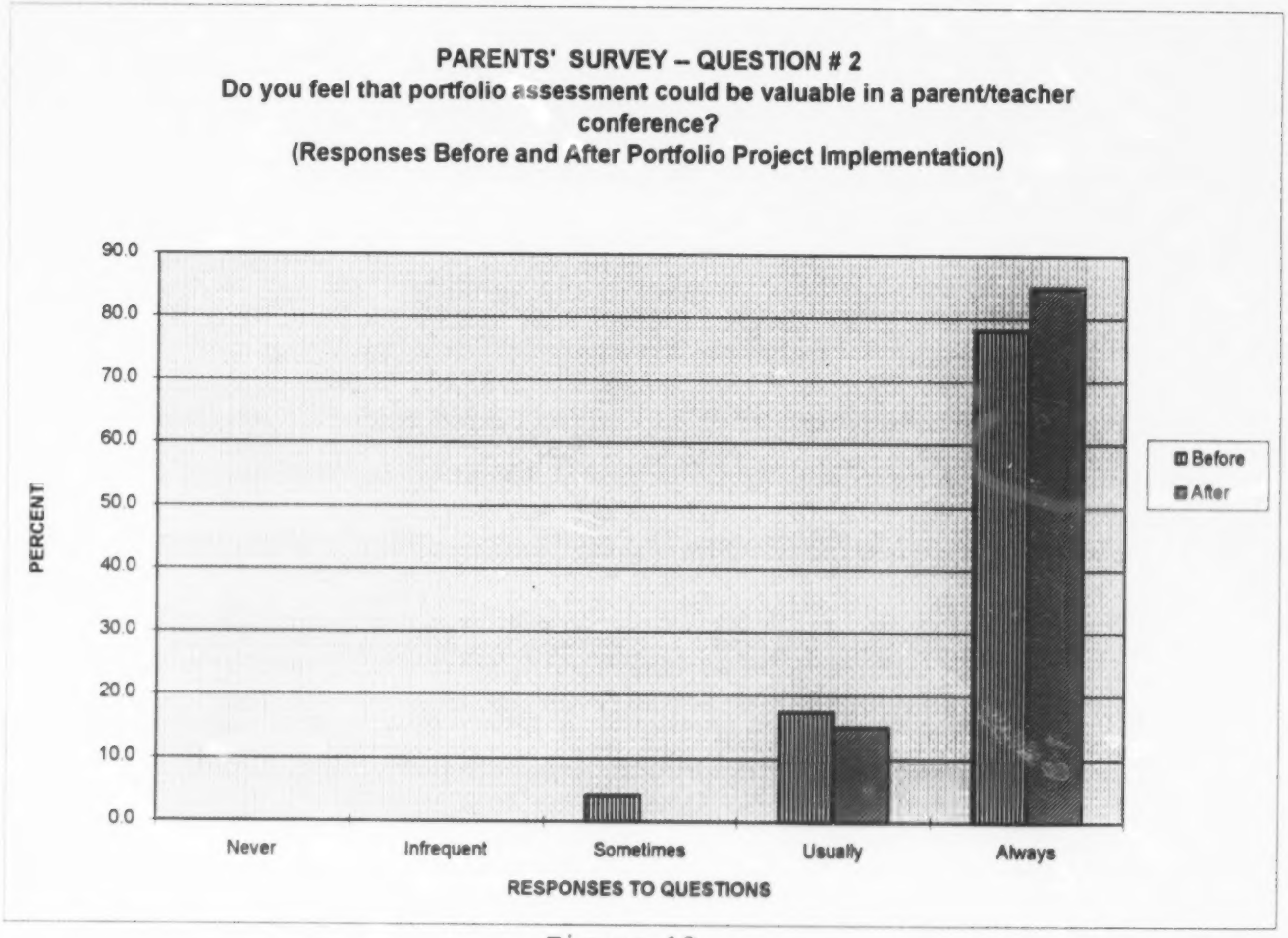

PARENTS' SURVEY -- QUESTION # 2
Do you feel that portfolio assessment could be valuable in a parent/teacher conference?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
PERCENT
90.0
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 12

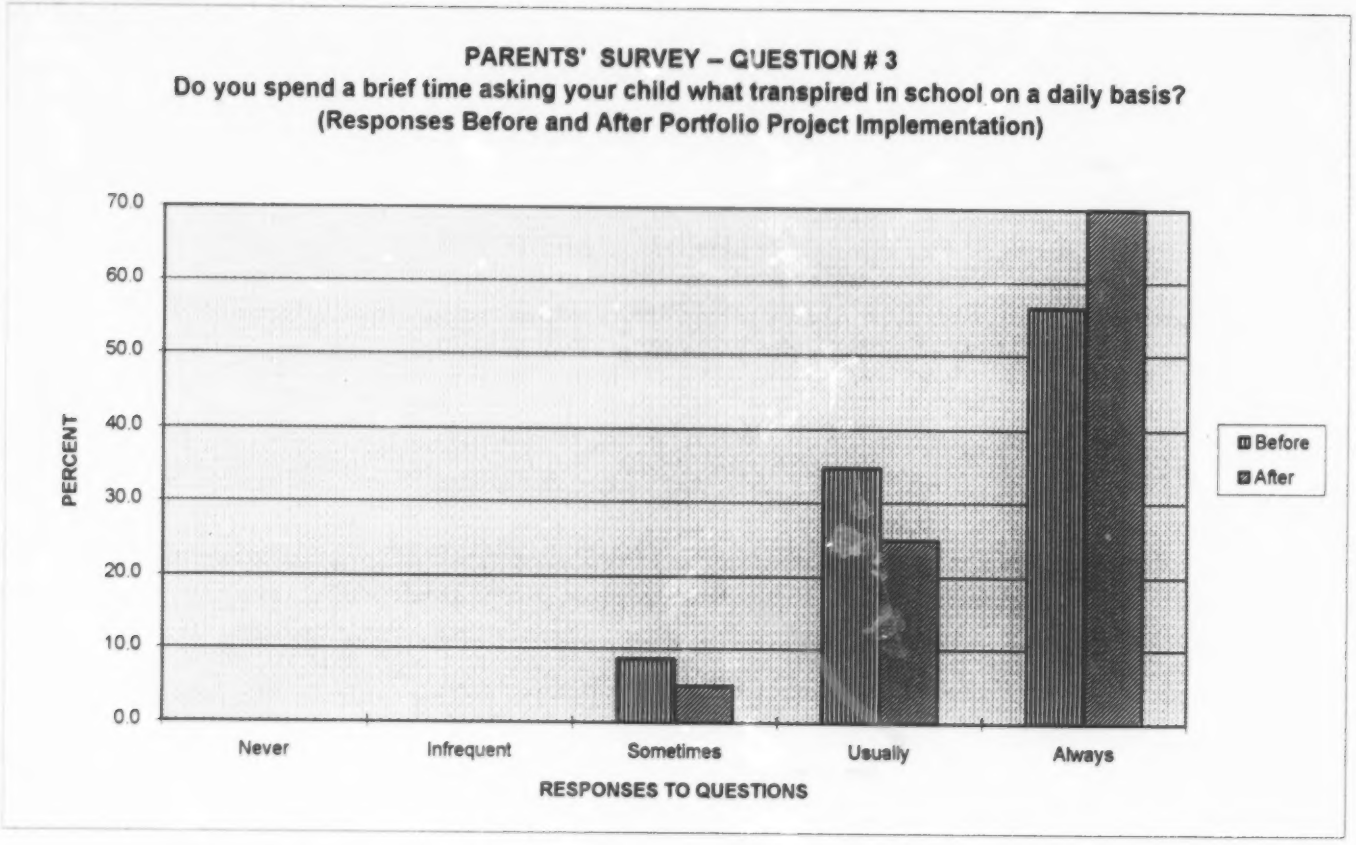

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 3
Do you spend a brief time asking your child what transpired in school on a daily basis?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 13

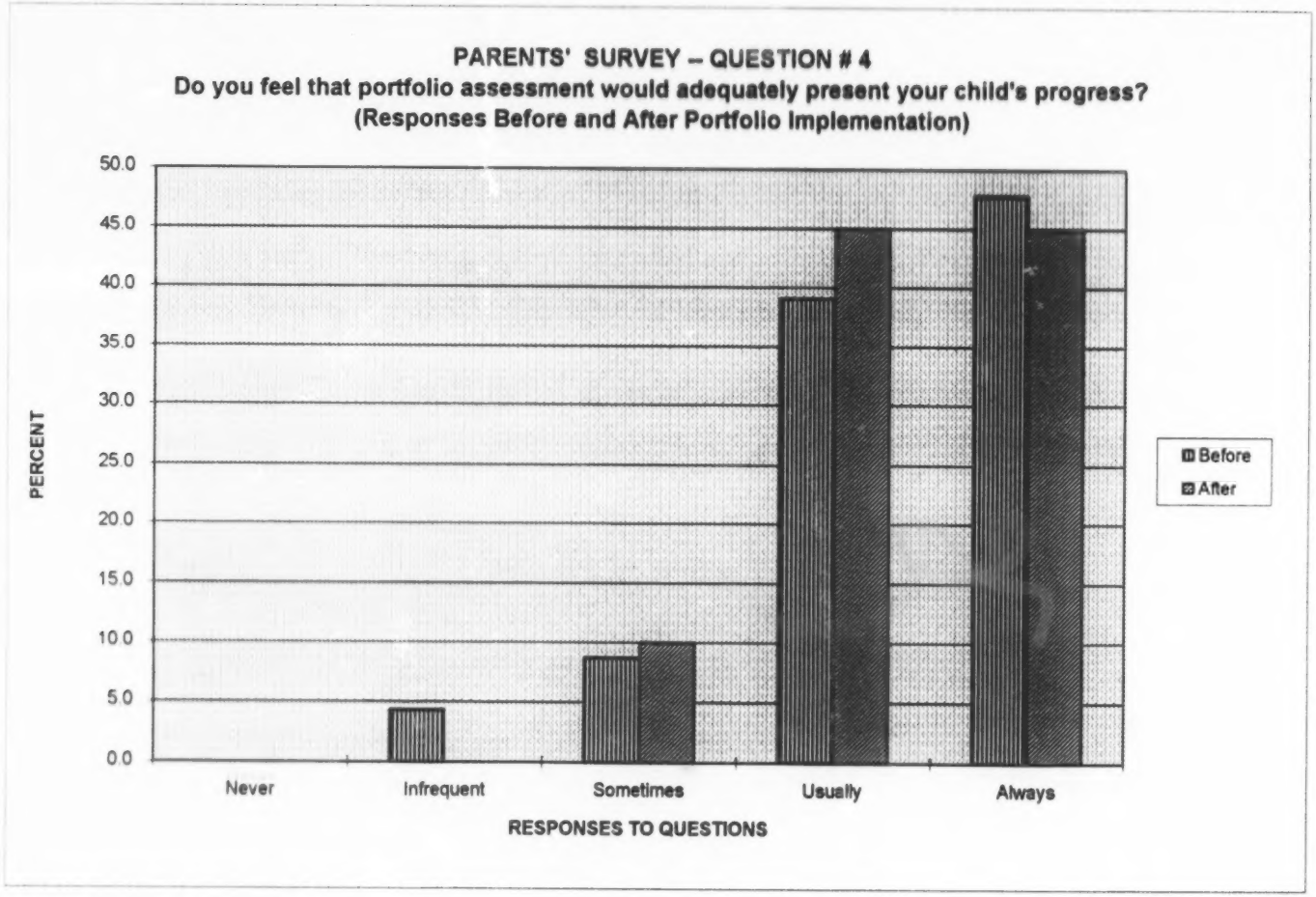

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 4
Do you feel that portfolio assessment would adequately present your child's progress?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Implementation)
50.0
45.0
40.0
35.0
30.0
25.0
20.0
15.0
10.0
5.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 14

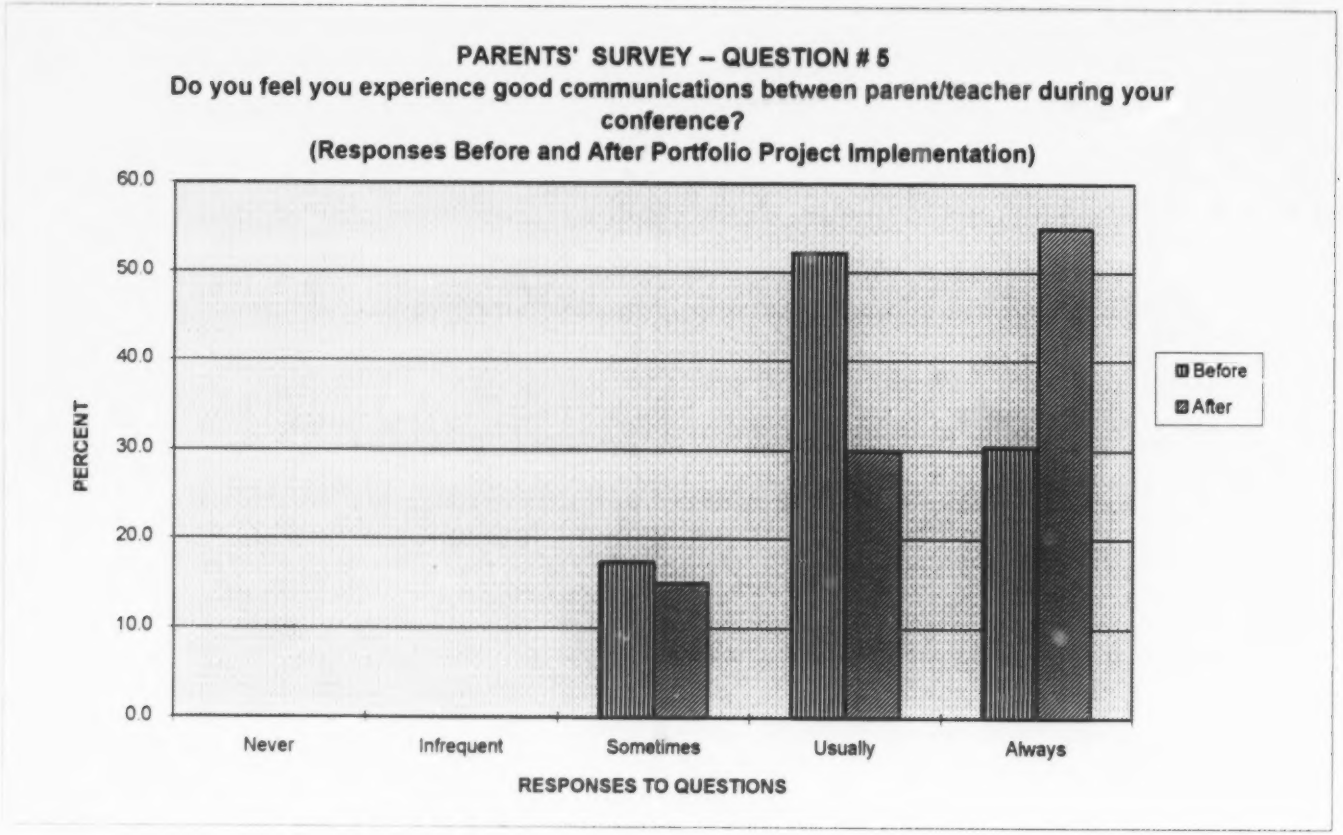

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 5
Do you feel you experience good communications between parent/teacher during your conference?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 15

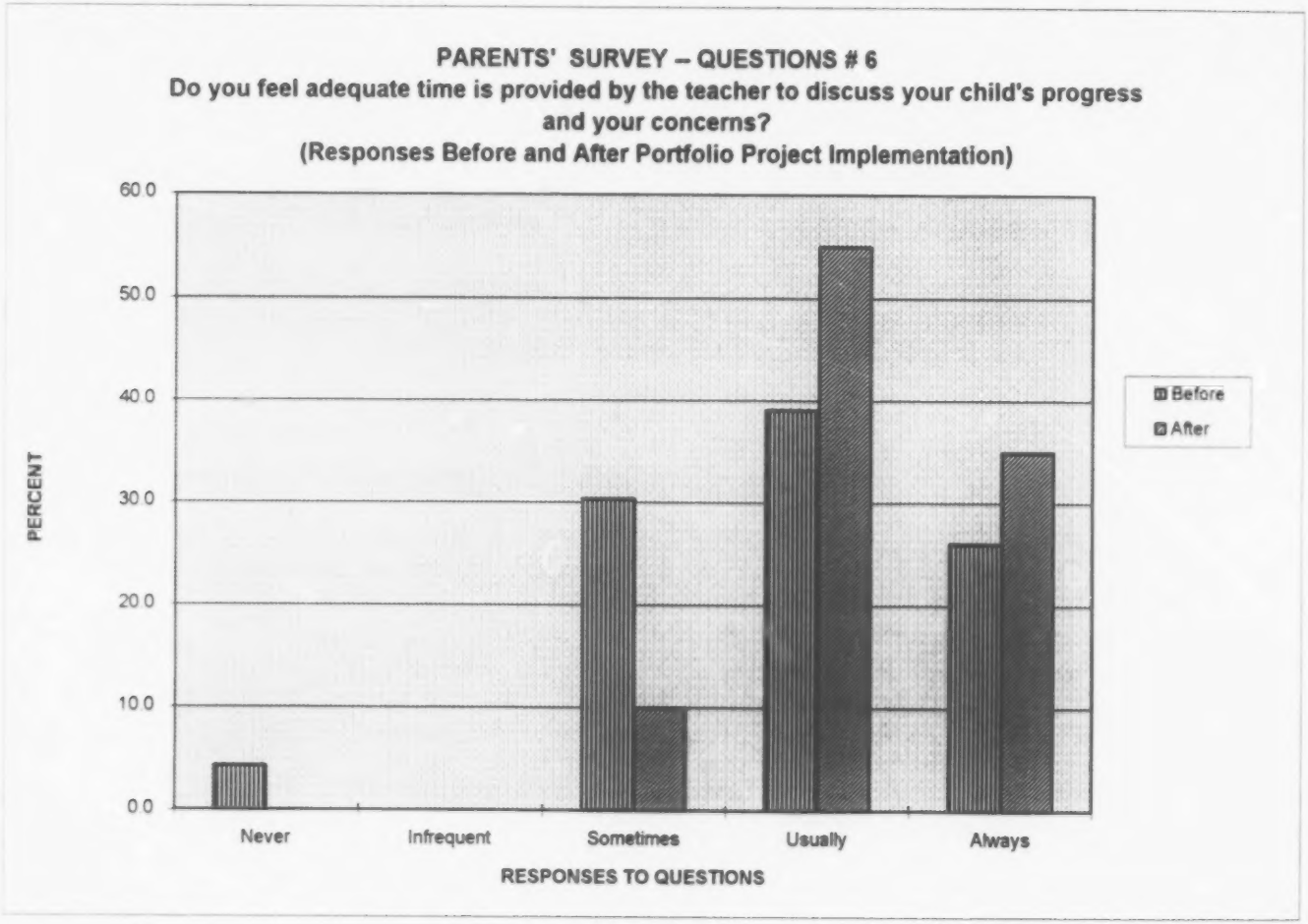

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTIONS # 6
Do you feel adequate time is provided by the teacher to discuss your child's progress and your concerns?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 16

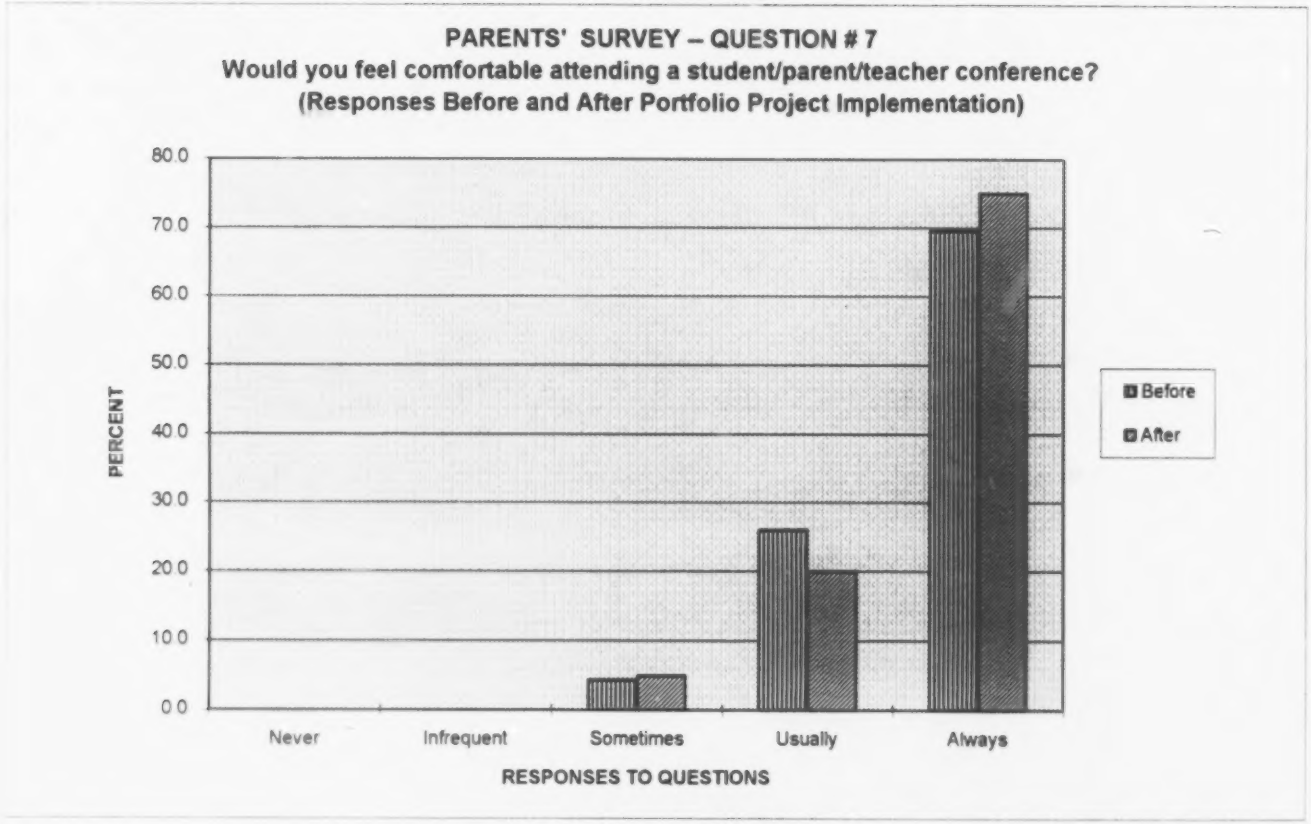

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 7
Would you feel comfortable attending a student/parent/teacher conference?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 17

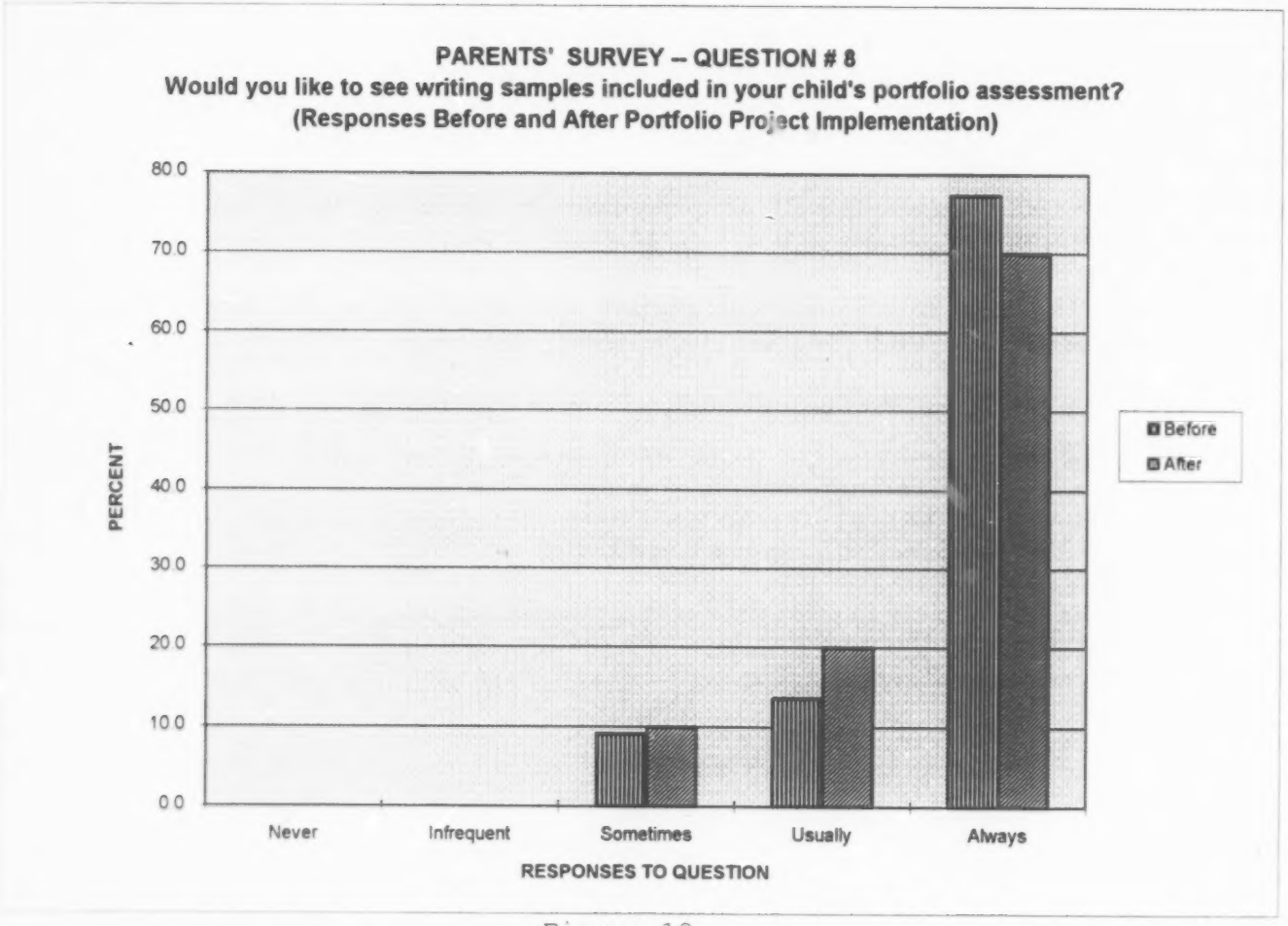

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 8
Would you like to see writing samples included in your child's portfolio assessment?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTION
Before
After

Figure 18

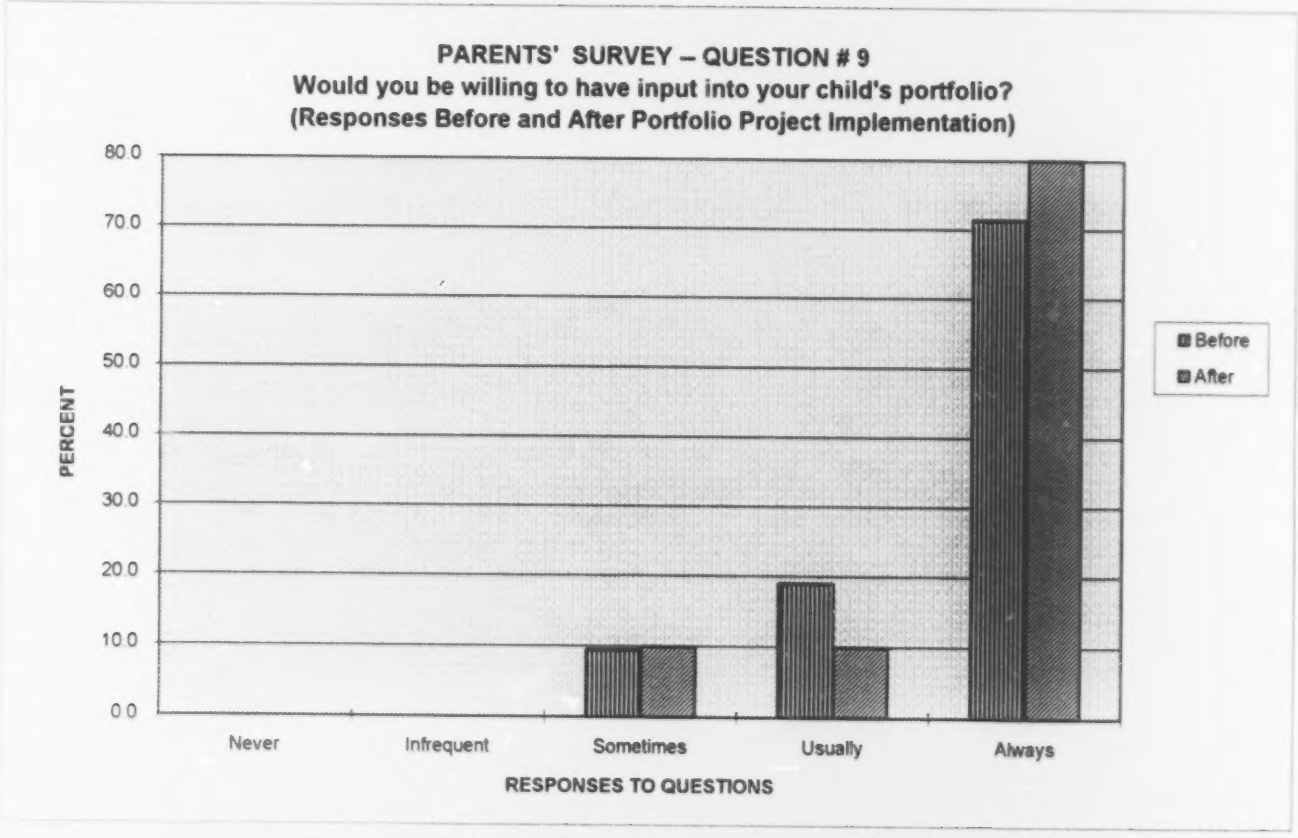

PARENTS' SURVEY – QUESTION # 9
Would you be willing to have input into your child's portfolio?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 19

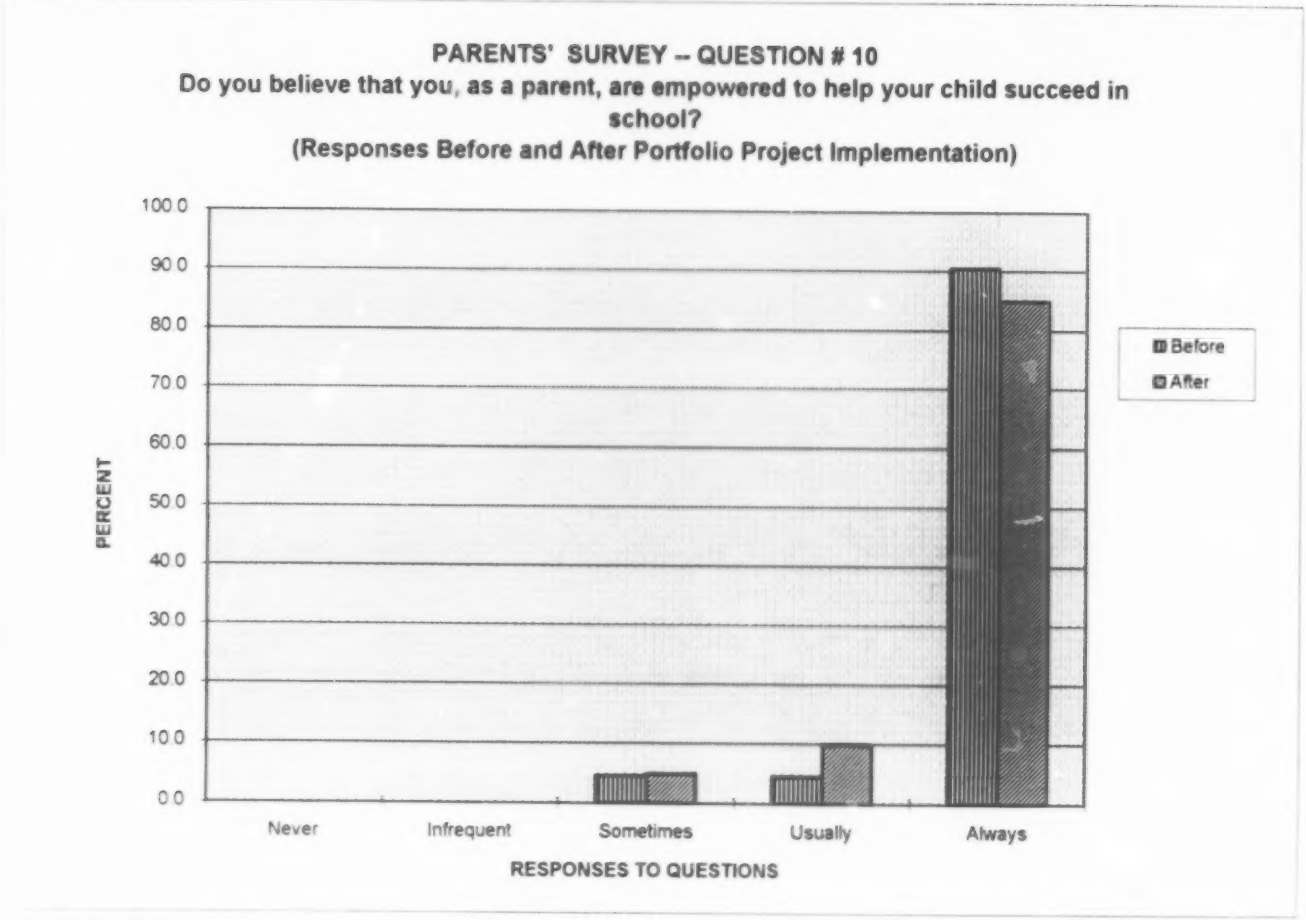

PARENTS' SURVEY -- QUESTION # 10
Do you believe that you, as a parent, are empowered to help your child succeed in school?
(Responses Before and After Portfolio Project Implementation)
100.0
90.0
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
PERCENT
Never
Infrequent
Sometimes
Usually
Always
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
Before
After

Figure 20

Objective Number 1 stated specifically at the end of the twelve week implementation period, fifty percent of the target students would demonstrate improvement in narrative writing by elevating scores one level on the rubric scale. Sixty-eight percent of the target students elevated the scores, twenty-seven percent of the scores remained the same, and a single student comprising five percent decreased in the holistic scoring. Therefore, the criteria for student narrative writing was successfully achieved.

Objective Number 2 stated sixty percent of the target students would participate in a teacher/parent/student conference. The author literally engaged in a telephone/note home campaign requesting the three-way conference. The concluding result was the participation of fifty-five percent of the students in a teacher/parent/student conference.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The implementation and conclusion of this project has intensified the interest in the writing process for the author. Once a student has been encouraged to find and establish the voice within and successfully transfer ideas to paper, the possibilities of writing for an audience or personal reasons are infinite.

This project was worth every moment consumed for nurturing, guiding, editing, revising, and anguishing with the students. The writing process was a difficult endeavor for a fourth grade person. The road was long and not smooth for these students. Guidance had to be firm regarding following established rules, yet gentle enough to encourage individuality. Many, many mini-lesson discussions centered on the understanding of the fact that corrections to samples did not mean rejection. The environment was carefully prepared to support taking risks. One of the most positive outcomes of the project

was the development and growth of students to experience feeling comfortable with the writing process.

The parent conference matter of contention has not been resolved to the author's satisfaction. More research on this subject is necessary. Perhaps one creditable enterprise worthy of attempting would be a parent survey specifically pertaining to realistic conference scheduling. A final question must be directed to promote resolution of the issue, perhaps requesting a written comment from the parent(s). The question needs to elicit an answer concerning how the teacher could accommodate the parent's schedule if the above times (on the survey) are not convenient. The site school administrators may need to become involved and request teachers to come in for evening conferences with parents, compensating the teachers with some other alternative time during the school day, if possible.

This project was arduous work, unyielding in the time demands on students and the author, yet proved to be enlightening and gratifying for the participants. The author plans to promote the utilization of portfolios as a viable method to enhance teacher/parent communication during conferences.

Reference List

Berger, R. (1991). Building a school culture of high standards: a teacher's perspective. In V. Perrone, (Ed.) Student Assessment (pp. 32-39). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Calfee, R.C., & Perfumo, P. (1993). Student Portfolios and Teacher Logs: Blueprint for a Revolution in Assessment. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED). Washington, D.C. (ERIC ED 362 887).

Church, C. J. (1993) Record keeping in whole language classrooms. In B. Harp, (Ed.) Assessment and Evaluation in Whole Language Programs (pp.187-210). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Florida School Report. January, 1995.

Florida Writes! Report on the 1995 Assessment, Grade 4.

Gelfer, J.I., & Perkins P.G. (1991). Developing Student Portfolios for Young Children: A Grading, Marking and Reporting Alternative That Fosters Communication with Families. (ERIC ED 335 147).

Glazer, S.M., & Brown, C.S. (1993). Collaborative assessment in reading and writing. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Graves, D. H. (1992). Help students learn to read their portfolios. In D. H. Graves, (Ed.) & B. S. Sunstein (Ed.) Portfolio Portraits. (pp. 85-95). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Grosvenor, L. (1994). Taking assessment matters into our own hands. In Student Portfolios. National Education Association of the United States.

Harp, B. (1993). The whole language movement. In B. Harp, (Ed.) Assessment and Evaluation in Whole Language Programs (pp.1-18). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Herman, J.L., Aschbauer, P.R., & Winters L. (1992). A practical guide to alternative assessment. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Johns, J.L., & VanLeirsburg, P. (1991). How Professionals View Portfolio Assessment. Northern Illinois University. (ERIC ED 335 668).

Kirby, D., Liner, T., & Vinz, R. (1988). Inside out. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Division of Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.

Paulson, F.L., & Paulson P.R. (1991). The Ins and Outs of Using Portfolios to Assess Performance. ERIC ED 334 250).

Reardon, S. J. (1993). A collage of assessment and evaluation from primary classrooms. In B. Harp, (Ed.) Assessment and Evaluation in Whole Language Programs (pp. 93-116). Norwood MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Roettger, D. (Ed.)., & Szymczuk, M. (Ed.). (1990). Guide for Developing Student Portfolios. (ERIC ED 333 966).

Routman, R. (1991). Invitations. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Stern, C. (1992). Student Writers Practicing Self-Assessment. (ERIC ED 354 509).

Sumner, H. M. (1993). Whole language assessment and Evaluation: a special education perspective. In B. Harp, (Ed.) Assessment and Evaluation in Whole Language Programs (pp.147-168). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Tierney, R.J., Carter, M.A., & Desai, L.E. (1991) Portfolio assessment in the reading-writing classroom. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Wiggins, G. (1990, August). A conversation with Grant Wiggins. The Instructor, p. 54.

APPENDIX A:

Teachers' Survey

Teacher Survey

Grade Level _____ Years of experience _____
Years of experience at current grade level _____

Circle one response

1. Could assessment be defined as the process of gathering evidence and documenting a child's learning and growth?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

2. Are portfolios workable tools for assessment?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

3. Do you feel portfolio assessment can be unique for each student?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

4. Do you believe that portfolio assessment can emphasize what a student knows?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

5. Do you think portfolio assessment can be utilized to present different developmental levels?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

6. Do you believe that portfolio assessment will enhance teacher/student conferences?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

7. Do you feel portfolio assessment shows progress through product samples?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

8. Do you feel portfolios should be passed through grade levels?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

9. Would you use portfolio assessment as a means of communication in a parent conference?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

10. Will you take the time to compile and use a portfolio effectively?
   1. never 2. almost never 3. sometimes
   4. almost always 5. always

Comments:

APPENDIX B:

Parents' Pre/Post Survey

Parent Survey

Circle one response

1. Have you been involved in a conference in which a portfolio was utilized to show your child's progress?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

2. Do you feel that portfolio assessment could be valuable in a parent/teacher conference?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

3. Do you spend a brief time asking your child what transpired in school on a daily basis?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

4. Do you feel that portfolio assessment would adequately present your child's progress?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

5. Do you feel you experience good communication between parent/teacher during your conference?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

6. Do you feel adequate time is provided by the teacher to discuss your child's progress and your concerns?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

7. Would you feel comfortable attending a student/parent/teacher conference?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

8. Would you like to see writing samples included in your child's portfolio assessment?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

9. Would you be willing to have input into your child's portfolio? (Encouragement notes from home, sign-off on books read, etc.)
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

10. Do you believe that you, as a parent, are empowered to help your child succeed in school?
   1. never 2. infrequently 3. sometimes
   4. usually 5. always

Comments:

APPENDIX C:

Checklist

	PARAGRAPH CHECKLIST	Yes	No	Needs to Rewrite
1	Topic sentence.			
2	Detail sentences tell about the main idea or topic sentence.			
3	Sentences follow a logical order.			
4	Summary sentences.			
5	Centered above paragraph is title.			
6	Indented the first sentence.			
7	Left margin is even.			
8	Language mechanics and usage:			
	a. capitalized first word of each sentence.			
	b. capitalized proper nouns.			
	c. capitalized pronoun I			
	d. capitalized first, last, and any other important words in a title.			
	e. punctuated ends of sentences properly.			
	f. used apostrophes for contractions and / or possessives.			
	g. used commas for: words in a series, introductory expression, city, state, day of the month and year, before connecting words in a compound sentence.			
	h. used no run-on sentences.			
9	Spelled each word correctly.			
10	Handwriting (manuscript or cursive)			
	a. letter formation.			
	b. spacing.			
	c. vertical quality (manuscript)			
	slant (cursive)			
	d. alignment and proportion.			
	e. line quality.			

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX D:

Rubric

FOURTH & FIFTH GRADE
based on Florida Writes

6 Points

The writing is focused on the topic, has a logical organizational pattern, and has ample supporting ideas or examples.

The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness.

The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice.

Subject/verb agreement and verb and noun forms are generally used correctly.

With few exceptions, the sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully.

A variety of sentence structures is used.

Handwriting is clear, concise, and letters are accurately formed.

5 Points

The writing is focused on the topic with adequate supporting ideas or examples.

There is an organizational pattern, although a few lapses may occur.

The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness.

Word choice is adequate but may lack precision.

Most sentences are complete, although a few fragments may occur.

There may be occasional errors in subject/verb agreement and in standard forms of verbs and nouns, but not enough to impede communication.

The conventions of punctuation, capitalization and spelling are generally followed.

A variety of sentence structures is used.

Handwriting clear and concise, words shaped and spaced clearly.

4 Points

The writing is generally focused on the topic although it may contain some extraneous or loosely related information.

An organizational pattern is evident, although lapses may occur.

The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness.

In some areas of the response, the supporting ideas may contain specifics and details, while in other areas, the supporting ideas may not be developed.

Word choice is generally adequate.

Knowledge of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization is demonstrated.

Commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

There has been an attempt to use a variety of sentence structures, although most are simple constructions.

Handwriting is clear, most letters are shaped properly and spaced well.

3 Points

The writing is generally focused on the topic although it may contain some extraneous or loosely related information.

Although an organizational pattern has been attempted and some transitional devices used, lapses may occur.

The paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness.

Some supporting ideas or examples may not be developed.

Word choice is adequate but limited, predictable, and occasionally vague.

Knowledge of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization is demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

There has been an attempt to use a variety of sentence structures, although most are simple construction.

Handwriting is clear most of the time and letters are shaped and spaced correctly most of the time.

2 Points

The writing may be slightly related to the topic or may offer little relevant information and few supporting ideas or examples or both.

The writing that is relevant to the topic exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern and use of transitional devices.

Development of supporting ideas may be inadequate or illogical.

Word choice may be limited or immature.

Frequent errors may occur in basic punctuation and capitalization.

Commonly used words may be limited to simple constructions.

Handwriting is difficult to read.

1 Point

The writing may only minimally address the topic because there is little, if any, development of supporting ideas, and unrelated information may have been included.

The writing that is relevant to the topic does not exhibit an organizational pattern; there are few, if any, transitional devices used to signal movement in the text.

Supporting ideas may be sparse, and they are usually provided through lists, cliches, and limited or immature word choice.

Frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure may impede communication.

The sentence structure may be limited to simple constructions.

Handwriting is unclear and letter are poorly shaped and/or spaced.

0 Points

Off topic-response not related to prompt's request.

Copied/Refusal-student's refusal to respond or simply copied or paraphrased the prompt as a response.

No Response-folder was blank; illegible or incomprehensible; foreign language; contained insufficient amount of writing to determine if the student was attempting to address the prompt.